



THOMPSON RIVERS
UNIVERSITY

OPEN LEARNING DIVISION

Open Learning Scholar Program, Thompson Rivers University

As a part of its growing research mandate, TRU-OL is inviting scholars to undertake research at its BC Centre for Open Learning in Kamloops, Canada. This document describes the Open Learning Scholars Program at TRU-OL, including criteria for selection of invitees and the financial and other supports available to successful candidates.

Program Goals:

1. to bring research expertise to the TRU campus to support the reinvigoration of research and scholarly work into open, distance and online education at TRU-OL
2. to further enhance the vibrancy and diversity of the research community at TRU-OL and at TRU generally

Terms and Stipends

Visiting Scholars are expected to be in residence for a minimum of one to a maximum of four months during the academic year, optimally during the fall or spring semesters (September-December; March-June). The precise time-frame for this residence is negotiable. During the residency, off campus research trips, interviews, attendance at scholarly meetings or speaking engagements must be limited to no more than 5 days, and scholars must not accept teaching appointments or other major commitments during the supported visit. Scholars will receive an honorarium of \$5,000 per month, to a maximum of \$20,000. TRU-OL will provide reimbursement for one round trip economy class ticket from the scholar's place of residence to the city of Kamloops, incidental travel expenses related to this trip, accommodations on campus, office space, computer services, library privileges, and other organizational support.

Expressions of Interest

TRU – OL invites expressions of interest from scholars who are recognized internationally for their research and publications in Prior Learning Assessment & Recognition (PLAR, RPL, APEL, VINNFL, etc.).

Interested scholars should submit the following information:

- A brief introduction providing information re: educational background, contact information, nationality, languages spoken
- Curriculum Vitae
- 1-page discussion document for the TRU-OL residency that would suggest possible plans for research and/or dissemination activity, and indicate the possible results of this activity to be achieved by the end of the visit (see listing of project possibilities, below).

Review of expressions of interest will commence in late January, 2010, although applications will be considered until an award is made. Proposed research activities will be reviewed by internationally recognized scholars serving on the board of the Prior Learning International Research Centre (<http://www.tru.ca/distance/plirc.html>), who will make a recommendation to the Director, Prior Learning Assessment and the Executive committee of Open Learning.

For additional information and/or to submit an expression of interest, please contact:

Dr. Christine Wihak
 Director, Prior Learning Assessment & Recognition
 e-mail: cwihak@tru.ca

Project Possibilities:

As indicated above, the visit of the VS would take place in the context of a project that would combine the strengths of the VS with the opportunities provided by his/her visit to TRU-OL. It is recognized that this activity may not be fully completed by the end of a 1-4 month stay, but the majority or bulk of any activity must be completed during the visit.

Examples of possible project types are listed below. They include the following (additional suggestions are welcome):

1. Short-term research into conditions, processes, technologies or other aspects characteristic of how PLAR is implemented at TRU-OL as an institution of open learning. (Note: the one- to four-month timeline means that longer term research projects [e.g. ethnographies] may not be possible.);
2. A multi-week series of workshops or seminars, representing the results of research, or the combination of research and praxis (e.g. action research, or undertaken in combination with training research);
3. A series of workshops, presentations and or training sessions on an innovative approach, techniques or ideas that is/are deemed relevant to the future direction of PLAR at TRU-OL.
4. Research that would be undertaken in collaboration with one or more individuals (in their capacity as researchers or researcher-learners) at TRU or TRU-OL;
5. Research and research collaborations of any kind that might be longer-term in nature, starting before and/or continuing after the visit, but producing a milestone product during or shortly after the visit;

6. A completed grant application that would ask for funding support for research involving collaboration with researchers at TRU and/or TRU-OL or research into TRU-OL.
7. Research of any of the kinds mentioned above that might produce a research report specifically of strategic value for TRU-OL. Note that such a report might require additional honoraria or costs than those budgeted, below.

While researchers are welcome to propose research on any aspect of PLAR, the following topics are of particular interest to TRU - OL:

- Quality Assurance in PLAR when done through distance, including prevention of academic misconduct (ie false learning claims and/or documentation)
- Assessment of learning from other knowledge traditions (ie non-European derived cultures)
- PLAR and Qualifications Frameworks in the developing world
- Researching integration of PLAR in workforce development processes eg development of learning cultures within the workplace
- The role of PLAR in developing learner identity and supporting the transition from informal to formal learning
- Conceptual and theoretical frameworks for thinking about prior learning and prior knowledge;
- Evaluation of recognition methods, techniques and processes that exist
- Longitudinal studies of PLAR 'graduates'
- Links between PLAR and industrial strategies in different countries
- Possible links between PLAR and tangential research literatures e.g professional knowledge, theory-practice relationships, service learning, informal learning
- Links and relationships between PLAR and professional recognition and professional standards in professions (professionally recognised learning)
- The use of E-portfolios for PLAR – implementation issues
- Comparative approaches to concepts underpinning PLAR in different sectors/contexts

About Thompson Rivers University Thompson Rivers University (TRU) is a dual mode, dual sector university with more than 20,000 students studying in programs spanning trades and vocational education through the Masters level. TRU attracts more than 1,200 international students per year from more than 60 countries to study on its campus.

The Open Learning Division of TRU (TRU-OL) specializes in providing mature learners with flexible learning options, open access to education, and a wide variety of course and program choices, meeting the needs of its own students and helping other institutions and organizations meet the open and online learning needs of their communities. This Division manages the open, distance and online delivery of courses and programs for the University. This includes offering more than 400 courses, comprising 57 different credentials, to 12,000 students per year. TRU-OL develops and offers print and web based courses for independent study, along with conventional (paced, cohort) online courses. TRU-OL is recognized for its research emphases in prior learning assessment

and recognition; e-learning tools, technology and methodologies; as well as instructional design curriculum development, and production techniques. TRU-OL is home to an international centre for Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition, and a Canada Research Chair in E-Learning Practices.

TRU-OL is situated in the BC Centre for Open Learning located on TRU's Kamloops campus, located in the Interior region of British Columbia, Canada. TRU is located in the heart of Kamloops, a city of over 80,000, is at the centre of the southern Interior of BC. Shopping, housing, entertainment and even the province's largest municipal park are just a couple of blocks away. Superb summers, four dramatic seasons, sports and outdoor recreation, and a diversity of cultural activity that few small cities can match are among the attractions of Kamloops.