
RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING POLICY

The Malta ICOM has adopted a policy that allows prior learning, whether certified or experiential, to be used, where appropriate, as partial credit towards their Osteopathy and Physiotherapy courses.

MFHEA OVERARCHING PRINCIPLES FOR RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING

- be learner centred, fair and respect the privacy of the individual.
- take account of Equality & Diversity issues.
- be accessible and flexible.
- be given for the learning and not the experience alone.
- involve the use of the Malta Qualifications Framework (MQF) in determining the level, volume and depth of evidence.
- be reliable, transparent and consistent.
- involve formal assessment for summative claims.
- be recognised to be of the same value of learning gained in formal learning.
- be quality assured both internally and externally, and
- be in line with any Statutory Legislation.

Policy and Procedures for the Recognition of Prior Learning

Definitions

RPL: Recognition of Prior Learning

RPL enables individuals to have their learning and experiences assessed by the College and recognised to gain entry to an award or qualification taught at the College and/or for the award of ECTS points to gain exemption from parts of an existing programme of study at the College or to gain entry with advanced standing.

Relevant learning is either assessed on an individual basis or recognised as part of an approved exemption for those who hold a particular professional award that sit on the MQF or who have the requisite certified learning undertaken at another Higher Education Institution.

APCL: Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning¹

Prior certificated learning (PCL) involves prior learning (such as professional development awards or employment-based awards), at HE level that has not been previously recognised via the award of credits or qualification(s) on the Malta Qualifications Framework (MQF). Summative RPL (SRPL) is where formal ECTS credit is awarded and recognised as having the same value as credit gained in formal teaching institutions.

The Malta ICOM expects that such applications will only be granted following a satisfactory mapping of learning outcomes for the modules for which exemption is sought and course aims against such prior certificated learning. This might require an applicant to provide a portfolio of evidence.

¹ Individual applicants may apply for exemptions from modules on taught courses at the College based on evidence of learning that has been formally assessed and certificated. This certificated learning should have occurred on programmes of study that sit on the MQF and includes both those programmes at HE level and those that lead to professional awards and qualifications.

APEL: Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning²

Prior experiential learning (PEL) involves prior learning gained through experience which can be assessed by academic staff of the College and formally recognised with the award of credit (or exemption from modules) towards a programme of study.

Credit Transfer

A system that allows credit awarded by one higher education body to be recognised and included towards the requirements for a programme at another higher education provider; or that allows credit gained on a particular programme to contribute towards the requirements of a different one. The learning outcomes of the first programme of study match the learning outcomes of the new programme of study.

Advanced Standing

An applicant may be granted permission to begin a course of study with credit granted for a full level of the course already achieved in recognition of previously completed studies and/or prior learning.

Exemption with RPL

A decision to exempt the applicant from one or more individual modules within the course of study, on the basis that the applicant has demonstrated achievement of the learning.

Procedure for the Recognition

(a) Prior to admission to the course, unless certificated learning in the context of HE covered by Malta ICOM Policy, the applicant should submit to the Academic Director information on the prior learning concerned. The information submitted should normally include:

- (i) Confirmation from the awarding institution of the level of the course in accordance with the Qualifications Framework; the date of completion and the modules taken (e.g., a transcript).
- (ii) Information from the awarding institution on the learning outcomes achieved, (for example, by means of a course/module specification) and details of the curriculum on the basis of which accreditation of prior learning is proposed.
- (iii) If the application is for Experiential Learning, information on the applicant's relevant professional background, including employment and any relevant training courses or other study undertaken.
- (iv) A description of how the applicant's qualification or professional experience relates to the learning outcomes and curriculum of the modules from which exemption is requested, including extracts from the module documentation of the department concerned.

² Applicants may apply for exemptions from modules on taught courses at the College based on evidence of learning arising from professional experience and related study or training which may not be formally certificated. This might require an applicant to provide a portfolio of evidence. Formative RPL is where the candidate is looking to have knowledge, skills and competencies assessed for personal or career development. *(I richiedenti possono chiedere esenzioni dai moduli sui corsi di insegnamento sulla base di prove di apprendimento derivanti da esperienza professionale e relativi studi o formazione che non possono essere formalmente certificate. Ciò potrebbe richiedere al richiedente di fornire un portafoglio di prove. RPL formativo è dove il candidato sta cercando di avere conoscenze, abilità e competenze valutate per lo sviluppo personale o di carriera.)*

All applications should normally be submitted prior to admission or re-admission to a course of study; retrospective applications will not be considered.

(b) The Academic Director may also ask the applicant to complete a piece of written work or to follow an RPL module where this has been developed by the relevant department.

(c) At least two members of the department concerned should be involved in the consideration of the APEL application, including those staff working in the capacity of Admissions Officer and the module leader. The departmental recommendation should clearly specify the modules for which exemptions are recommended and the total credit volume concerned. This will be clearly stated and returned to the admission department who will notify the student of the decision.

(d) A letter will be sent by the admissions team to the applicant informing them of the result of their application.

Admission: RPL as (part of) required entrance qualifications

It is possible to admit candidates to a degree programme where a candidate can demonstrate that their previous learning experiences have resulted in relevant learning that is broadly equivalent (in terms of content, volume and level) to the learning achieved at the level(s) normally required for entry to the relevant programme and are mapped within MQF according to the level of the outcomes of learning and the volume of learning.

Where experiential learning is offered in order to meet admission requirements, the experience for which recognition is being sought must be demonstrably relevant to some or all the skills normally required for admission to the particular programme as well as being of an appropriate quantity and level.

Students with 60 ECTS at MQF level 5 or 6 may be exempted from all Year 1 modules where sufficient evidenced mapping is demonstrated.

Students with 60 ECTS at MQF level 5 or 6 and 60 ECTS at MQF level 6 may be exempted from all Year 1 and 2 modules where sufficient evidenced mapping is demonstrated.

Admission into other than Year One: RPL as contributory degree credits

It is possible to exempt candidates where a candidate can demonstrate that their previous learning experiences have resulted in relevant learning that is broadly equivalent (in terms of content, volume and level) to the learning achieved at the level(s) for which the credit will be given. This learning must have been subject to valid and reliable methods of assessment.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQS)

What does RPL mean?

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) refers to learning you have already gained before starting your programme at ICOM. Recognition of your prior learning means that it can be counted towards the entry requirements for a programme, or, can allow you to be awarded credit within your chosen programme.

How do I apply for entry to a programme on the basis of RPL?

If you think that your prior learning is equivalent to the advertised formal entry requirements for a programme of study, please contact the Admissions and Enquiry Service who will be able to advise you on how you can make an application. Your prior learning will be considered and, if successful, an offer for entry to an appropriate level of the programme will be made.

How do I apply for credit within a programme of study?

Your application needs to be submitted prior to admission or re-admission to a course of study; retrospective applications will not be considered. You should complete and submit the RPL claim form with full details of your prior learning and the module(s) you are applying for credit against. You will be asked to evidence your prior learning and so any evidence of prior learning that you already have should also be submitted with your claim. As part of the consideration of your claim, you may also be asked to provide further information or evidence if required. Completed RPL claim forms should be submitted to the Admission Team.

Is my Prior Learning too old to be given Credit or to use for Credit Transfer?

To be awarded credit within your programme the learning needs to be up to date, relevant and appropriate to your programme of study. Your RPL Advisor will be able to provide guidance on this, qualifications achieved more than 5 years ago will be reviewed to be eligible for credit transfer.

How much credit within a programme of study can I claim through RPL?

There are limits to the amount of credit you can claim through RPL to ensure that enough study for your qualification is undertaken with ICOM. A full list of the maximum amounts of credit you can claim through RPL is provided in the Malta ICOM Recognition of Prior Learning Policy, and you should consider this before you submit a claim. The maximum RPL is 120 credits.

What about awards with Merit or Distinction?

All RPL credit, both certificated and informal, is ungraded. This means that no marks will be available from RPL credit to count towards awards with Merit or Distinction. At Malta ICOM, awards with Merit or Distinction are considered solely on the basis of achieving all credit points required for consideration of the award with Merit/Distinction through completion of Malta ICOM modules.

What happens to my RPL claim form?

Your claim will be assessed by two academic members of staff: the Assessor and the Moderator. You will be supported throughout the process, advised if any additional information is required and given an indication of the length of time that the assessment of your claim will take. Generally, this will be within three working weeks of submission of your claim form, however, it may take longer if a claim for recognition of informal learning needs additional supporting evidence. Advice on this can be obtained from the RPL Advisor supporting your claim.

What happens next?

Step 1

Once the RPL form is processed you will be contacted by the RPL assessor for those units of competency will contact you to arrange a phone or online interview to conduct an initial discussion about your application. The goal of the initial discussion is to ascertain whether there will be sufficient available evidence that will support the Recognition of Prior Learning application. No matter how a unit of competency is awarded, it must only be done so after the assessor has ascertained that the evidence is sufficient, valid, authentic and current i.e., up to date.

The initial interview is an informal one. The Assessor will simply be asking questions to get a better understanding of your relevant background and experience related to the units of competency you are seeking recognition for. They will ask you general questions about relevant employment and training. This

will include the tasks you undertook and how regularly you did them. You will also be asked about the results of any workplace performance reviews i.e., what did your employers think about your skill level.

They will also ask specific questions that will help them (and you) gauge your level of current knowledge and skills for each specific unit. Remember, they are not deliberately trying to trip you up – they simply are using questions that a person who is sufficiently skilled in that area should be able to answer.

If you and they determine that you are unlikely to achieve RPL – you will then be assisted with how to progress your study. Fees are only charged if your application progresses beyond this point.

Step 2

Your Assessor will have advised you whether it is realistic to proceed with the Application for RPL to this stage (at which point in time fees are charged). The objective of this stage is to gather the evidence that can be used to support your RPL. This may be done in several ways with the most common being a Portfolio of Documents; and/or Demonstration/ Observation of Practical skills.

Some points to be aware of about this:

- supporting evidence needs to be able to be proven as authentic.
- the portfolio needs to be properly presented – with it being clear how each provided evidence items supports your application (i.e., don't just send us every document you have).
- if the evidence is not recent evidence – consideration needs to occur about whether this work skill or task has since changed i.e., are your skills and knowledge still up to date.
- there needs to be sufficient evidence to show that you can demonstrate all the required skills and knowledge reliably.
- The Assessor will formally consider all evidence provided and compare them to the requirements of the unit(s) of competence. From this stage they will identify what documents and conversations are required for the next step. They may have already identified gaps i.e., aspects of the unit(s) of competency that you do not meet. They may advise you that you can address this gap by undertaking a component of the training.

Step 3

The purpose of this stage is to assist with the authenticity aspect and to address any gaps identified in the evidence provided. It also supports proving workplace competence vs. theoretical knowledge of the subject. You will be advised of the activities needed in this stage. They may include:

- Requests for written “references” from past workplace supervisors.
- Phone “reference checking” by contact past employers and verifying information provided in your portfolio.

In some instances, the Trainer/Assessor may simply ask you to explain again certain information. For example, they may ask you in depth about a provided item of evidence as a way of testing that you were the author of that document as claimed.

After this stage is completed successfully the recognition results will be made. It is normal that the final decision be confirmed after a college director has reviewed the RPL application and evidence and agrees that they support the Assessors judgment and decision.

What Result Will I Be Awarded?

Examples of the types of evidence which may be required for formal learning:

When considering applications for the credit transfer of prior certificated learning ICOM will need to see evidence of your prior certificated learning, the detail of what you learned, when this was learned, who awarded you the credit, and at what level of study the credit was awarded.

Examples of the evidence you will be asked to provide may include module and syllabus descriptors or handbooks, transcripts, and confirmation of the marks you achieved for this learning. Once this information is received the Assessor will review the evidence in order to identify if the learning you have already achieved is comparable to the learning you would achieve by studying the module(s) at Malta ICOM.

Applications for the award of credit based on informal learning

When you make a claim based on informal learning, it is expected that you will reflect on experiences, identify the learning within these experiences, and provide evidence of the learning achieved. Evidence of informal learning will therefore come in a variety of types and forms. Examples of how this type of learning can be evidenced may:

Reflective portfolio of evidence (submitted electronically) which could include (but is not limited to):

- video and/or audio material
- analytical evaluations of practice
- analysis of issues underlying practice and the learning associated with that
- an assessor's observation of practice
- detailed curriculum vitae to support a context for the claim

The portfolio should include an essay or annotated grid to allow the applicant to explain the assessor what MQF or professional levels they have achieved.

Once all the evidence of learning has been received, the Assessor will review the evidence and undertake a process of assessment for credit rating the learning.

How much will my RPL claim cost?

Some applications for RPL are free and some incur a charge. Please see below.

- There is a standard fee to apply for entry to a programme based on prior learning.
- There is a fee charged for claims for credit within a programme based on informal learning.

This is because the informal learning must be assessed and credited rated for it to be applied, please contact the Admissions Team for information on the current schedule of fees.