

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) at ICOM 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 entry requirements for a programme, or, can allow you to be awarded credit within your chosen programme.

Full information on RPL at ICOM can be found in the ICOM Recognition of Prior Learning Policy.

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.

The RPL Claim Form and full ICOM Recognition of Prior Learning Policy is available to download from the ICOM website here:

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 not be considered up 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 a sufficient amount of 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 ICOM Recognition of Prior Learning Policy and you should consider this before you submit a claim.

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 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 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 a number of 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 under the next step. They may already identify 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 about 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 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.

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 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 achieve

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 on the basis of prior learning.

There is a standard for making a claim for the transfer of credit already achieved at another institution.

There is a fee charged for claims for credit within a programme on the basis of informal learning.

This is because the informal learning has to be assessed and credit rated in order for it to be applied.

However, if credit is applied to your programme, you will also receive a tuition fee

reduction as you will not be studying as many modules as originally anticipated. Please contact the

Admission Team for information on the current schedule of fees.

For further information:

Application (RPL for entry) - Admissions and Enquiry Service

RPL Policy – Recognition of Prior Learning at ICOM