

Union Theological College

Recognition of Prior Learning

- 1.1 The College delivers postgraduate degrees and diplomas on behalf of the Presbyterian Theological Faculty, Ireland (PTFI), which is the awarding body.
- 1.2 The College invites applications to its degree and diploma programmes from all prospective students who possess the ability, knowledge and experience required to benefit from them. The College demonstrates its commitment to this aspiration through its arrangements for credit accumulation and transfer, and the recognition of prior learning. The College operates a RPL scheme which recognises relevant prior learning for admission and/or credit purposes.
- 1.3 Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is the generic term used for demonstrated learning that has occurred at some time in the past. It encompasses:

Recognition of Prior Certificated Learning (RPCL)

The process through which previously formally assessed academic learning for which credit has been awarded is considered and, as appropriate, recognised for academic purposes. This is also known as credit transfer where the credits were awarded by another Higher Education provider.

Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning (RPEL)

The process through which an applicant reflects on experiences on learning achieved outside education or training systems, which is assessed and, as appropriate, recognised for academic purposes.

- 1.4 The College recognises that some prospective students may not be able to provide evidence that they meet its entry requirements through the accepted qualifications detailed in College publications, but they are able to provide substantial and relevant alternative evidence that they have the potential to succeed on their chosen programme.

2. Key Principles of the College's Scheme

- 2.1 RPL may enable an applicant to:
 - gain admission to a programme in lieu of standard entry requirements and/or
 - be awarded credit for a proportion of a programme and therefore gain exemption from specified taught modules of the programme.
- 2.2 Credits are only awarded on the basis of evidence which is typically:
 - sufficient to determine that learning outcomes have been met.

- authentic to the work of the applicant.
 - recent enough to imply current knowledge or capability, i.e. no more than 10 years old.
 - appropriate to the level and volume of credit being claimed.
- 2.3 When awarding credit for prior learning, where appropriate, the College will consider the requirements of ecclesiastical bodies for licensing, ordination, and ministerial recognition.

3. **General Guidelines**

- 3.1 The Faculty is responsible for the monitoring and development of the College's policy and procedures with regard to RPL.
- 3.2 It is the applicant's responsibility to prepare an application and to submit adequate documentary evidence, including, as appropriate, certificates.
- 3.3 The applicant will be advised on the production and submission of an RPL claim by a member of staff not involved in the decision making process. This member of staff will be the RPEL Advisor.
- 3.4 The Admissions Panel will consider and approve RPCL claims for admission made at the time of application.

4. **The Award of Credit**

- 4.1 Specific credit may be awarded where prior learning matches level, volume, content and the learning outcomes of a given module(s).
- 4.2 General credit may be awarded where prior learning is recognised to be of sufficient depth and quality as to be assigned a specific level and amount (i.e. a semester or year of a programme), but which cannot be matched to the subject content of specified module(s).
- 4.3 RPL credit is always ungraded and will not count towards final degree classification.
- 4.4 Credit will not normally be granted for any modules that have already contributed towards an award.

5. **Limitations to the Award of Credit**

- 5.1 The minimum claim allowable under the RPL Scheme is equal to the relevant whole module (with the specified number of credit points) within any given programme.
- 5.2 The **maximum** credit that can be claimed for postgraduate programmes is normally one-third of the total required for the programme. This will be:
- 20 credit points towards a Postgraduate Certificate.
 - 40 credit points towards a Postgraduate Diploma.
 - 60 credit points towards a Master's degree.

6. **Instances where RPL credit cannot be awarded**

- 6.1 RPL credit cannot be awarded for any module which comprises a major project or dissertation.
- 6.2 RPL credit cannot be awarded where ecclesiastical body requirements are not met.

7. Time Limit for Process

7.1 The use of RPL does not alter the admissions process for the programme. Deadlines for acceptance of an offer of a place will not be extended to accommodate the RPL assessment decisions.

7.2 Once a full application documenting the claim has been received, the student will normally receive the decision within 15 working days.

8. Applications for Recognition of Prior Certificated Learning (RPCL)

8.1 All requests for RPCL should be submitted on the RPL Application Form. Where this is made prior to admission, it should be submitted at the same time as the application for entry.

8.2 Where the applicant is applying for exemption for credit purposes they must, through the use of syllabi, programme descriptions, formal certificates, transcripts, etc., demonstrate through their certified prior learning, they have achieved the learning outcomes of the relevant module(s) for which they are applying for exemption.

8.3 Where the applicant is requesting admission to a programme in lieu of standard entry qualifications they must demonstrate that their certified prior learning is at a standard that demonstrates that they have the ability, knowledge and experience to enter the programme.

8.4 Evidence of prior certificated learning should normally be presented in the form of a portfolio. The portfolio should contain written material which clearly demonstrates how the applicant's prior learning is evidence of their achievement of the requisite module learning outcome(s) if they are claiming exemption or their ability, knowledge and experience to enter the programme in lieu of the standard entry requirements.

8.5 A typical portfolio should normally contain:

- The title of the programme for which they are applying, or on which they are registered.
- The relevant programme specification, transcripts, certificates and module descriptors for the certificated prior learning.
- The module(s) or elements of the programme from which exemption is being sought, with a clear indication of how the learning outcomes have been achieved through the certificated prior learning being claimed.
- A commentary on how the certified prior learning enables them to meet the entry requirements in lieu of standard entry requirements.

8.6 Applicants for admission to a programme will be invited to attend for interview and will be required to complete a critical review in order to demonstrate their ability.

8.7 Once the RPL process is complete, any accompanying original documentation will be returned to the applicant. Applicants may be required to submit original documents on request or at registration.

8.8 Students exiting with a Postgraduate Diploma or Postgraduate Certificate may be permitted to rescind this award and 'upgrade' to a Masters (or Postgraduate Diploma) by successfully completing the appropriate further component of the same programme (or one which the Faculty deems to be significantly similar) providing the following conditions are met:

- a suitable programme is being offered by the College; and

- rescinding occurs within five years of the student's initial registration.

If a student is admitted to a PTFI programme with such recognition for prior achievement undertaken at the College, any PTFI award previously made to the student on the basis of that prior achievement will be rescinded by the College prior to the commencement of the new programme of study. It should be noted that the PG Certificate in Biblical Greek will count as 40 CATS for exemption purposes if an application is made for the MTh New Testament.

- 8.9 A formal record will be made of exemptions granted to students when they were admitted. Students will be notified in writing of all decisions.

9. Applications for Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning (RPEL)

- 9.1 Potential applicants considering submitting a claim for admission or award of credit on the basis of RPEL only are required to discuss their intended claim with the Head of Department in the first instance.
- 9.2 Applicants for RPEL should submit an RPL Application Form.
- 9.3 The applicant must demonstrate the coherence, balance and progression of their learning through critical reflection. Appropriate sources of experiential learning may include: work experience, voluntary work, short course, or other relevant experiences.
- 9.4 Evidence of prior experiential learning should normally be presented in the form of a portfolio. The portfolio should contain written material which clearly demonstrates how the student's prior experience is evidence of his/her achievement of the requisite module(s) or ability, knowledge and experience to enter the programme in lieu of standard entry requirements

A typical RPEL portfolio should contain:

- Cover sheet with the applicant's name, the title of the programme they have applied to and the date of submission of the portfolio.
- Table of contents.
- Personal profile or full Curriculum Vitae.
- Employment History.
- Education and Training History.
- Training and Professional Qualifications.

and include the following sections:

- (i) Introduction – setting the context of the claim in the overall academic and career plans of the student.
- (ii) Experience – an expansion on the CV or other significant life events including a description of experiences of informal learning activities, e.g., conferences and workshops.
- (iii) Learning account – an account of the learning that has resulted and reflections on what has been learned from the experience.
- (iv) Currency – the College would normally expect the experience or qualifications to have been gained within the previous 10 years.

- (v) Relevance – the applicant should be able to demonstrate in detail that the learning for which a claim is being made is appropriate to the programme of study.
- 9.5 RPEL claims for exemption from module(s) must also include in the portfolio the following:
- (i) Full details of the module(s) or elements of the programme from which exemption is being sought including learning outcomes.
 - (ii) A clear statement on how each learning outcome has been achieved through the experiential prior learning being claimed.
- 9.6 Applicants will be invited to attend for interview and will be required to submit a critical review.
- 9.7 Decisions on admissions will be made by the Admissions Panel.
- 9.8 Decisions on exemptions from module(s) will be made by the Head of Department in conjunction with an academic from another Department. The decision will be reported to the Board of Examiners.
- 9.9 Where the applicant provides evidence of both certificated learning and experiential learning this will be taken into account.
- 9.10 Once the RPEL process is complete, any accompanying original documentation will be returned to the applicant. Applicants may be required to submit original documents on request.
- 10. Fees**
- 10.1 No charge will be made for RPL claims for admission.
- 10.2 No charge will be made for RPCL claims for exemption.
- 10.3 For RPEL claims for exemption a fee of 25% of the relevant module fee will be charged.
- 11. Appeals**
- 11.1 There is no right of appeal against a decision on exemption from module(s) except on grounds of procedural irregularity.
- 11.2 Applicants for admission in lieu of standard entry requirements may appeal a decision using the Admissions Appeals Procedure.

Union Theological College

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Application Form

Please indicate intended RPL claim route:

RPEL (Admission) RPCL (Admission) RPCL (Exemption) RPEL (Exemption)

Part 1 – Personal Information	
Surname	
Forename (s)	
Title	
Date of Birth	
Student Number (if applicable)	
Contact Details	
Home Address	
Postcode	
Telephone Numbers	
Home:	
Mobile:	
Work:	
Email address	
Part 2 – Proposed Course of Study	
Programme Title:	
Mode of attendance:	
Month and year of entry:	

Please tick the level of RPL for which you are applying:

(i)	Admission	
(ii)	Level or Module(s) credit/exemption	
(iii)	If you are applying for module exemption please list the module(s) for which you are seeking exemption	

Part 3 - Outline of RPL Claim

Please explain briefly how you meet the requirements for the exemption of credit or for admission in lieu of standard entry requirements.

I enclose the following documentation:

(i)	Certificated Evidence	Please list all certificated learning 1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6.
(ii)	Portfolio of Evidence	

Applicant Signature

Date

In the first instance applications should be returned to the RPL Advisor whom you discussed your claim with, where appropriate, either electronically or by hardcopy.

Part 4 – Decision

I can confirm that the applicant has been advised appropriately regarding the RPL process and this application is ready for a decision to be made.

Signed by Head of Academic Administration:

Date:

Decision (Please tick appropriate box)	Details
Credit recommended <input type="checkbox"/>	
Credit <u>NOT</u> recommended <input type="checkbox"/>	
Admission recommended <input type="checkbox"/>	
Admission <u>NOT</u> recommended <input type="checkbox"/>	

For Admission: Head of Admissions Panel (sign and date)

For Exemption: Head of Department (sign and date)

For Office Use Only: return to Head of Academic Administration
