

IOTA PROGRAMME RULES

A ABOUT IOTA

A.1 GETTING STARTED

- A.1.1** This should be read in conjunction with other sections headed IOTA Programme.

B PARTICIPATION RULES

B.1 ISLAND CHASERS' PARTICIPATION OPTIONS

- B.1.1** There are four categories of application for participation: Standard HF, Club, VHF / UHF and SWL, the latter issued on a 'Heard' basis. Most applicants start their participation in the Standard HF category of application.
- B.1.2** An applicant may enter only one record per call-sign and per DXCC entity in a category although he / she may enter more than one category. On opening a record he may indicate a mode specialization (Phone, CW or Data) but, if he does so, he will need to make all updates in the same mode failing which he should move to All Modes.
- B.1.3** All applicants are required to comply with the rules applying to the category selected.

B.2 APPLICANT REQUIREMENTS

- B.2.1** For registration in the Standard HF and VHF / UHF categories an applicant should be a licensed radio amateur using an amateur radio callsign issued personally to him / her by the licensing authority and valid on the date of the contact(s) claimed. For requirements governing the use of more than one callsign to feed a record, see Additional Note 1 below. IOTA Management may ask to see proof of licence. For other categories of application, see below.
- B.2.2** If the applicant is an RSGB member, he / she is entitled to a discount on administration and certificate fees on submission of proof of membership in the form of a recent address label from RadCom, the members' magazine, or a note of his / her membership number.
- B.2.3** The applicant should use the latest available information when preparing an application, i.e. the guidance detailed here in this Directory or on the RSGB IOTA web-site¹. Do not use as your reference an IOTA Directory earlier than IOTA Directory 2016 because of changes to the rules as well as to the listings since then.

B.3 CONTACT REQUIREMENTS

- B.3.1** For credit to be given in the Standard HF and VHF / UHF categories applicants should make all contacts personally using the valid amateur radio callsign issued to them. Contacts made by another operator using this callsign in a contest or special event or generally on behalf of the applicant are not valid for these categories of application.
- B.3.2** All contacts must be made from the same DXCC entity and from a land-based location. The location shall be defined as the location of the operator. Contacts made while operating land mobile are accepted. See Additional Note 2 below.
- B.3.3** All contacts must be made with other licensed amateur stations and in accordance with licence conditions.
- B.3.4** All contacts must have taken place since 15 November 1945.
- B.3.5** Contacts may be made on any amateur radio frequency band between 1.8 and 30MHz licensed to the applicant and his contact. IOTA Management may ask to see proof of licence.

- B.3.6** Contacts with maritime mobile stations near islands, whether or not they operate with a /MM call-sign, will not be accepted for credit. This applies also to stations on board boat anchored close to shore.

- B.3.7** Contacts made using a radio, Internet or non-wire direct link from a land- to a sea-based station or from a sea- to a land-based station to facilitate or enhance signal transmission or reception will not count.

- B.3.8** Contacts made by the applicant using a single remote receiving or transmitting site are accepted for credit if the remote site is land-based, contained within a 500 metre (547 yard) radius circle, not located more than 100 kilometres (62 statute miles) from the applicant's location and is nominated as being in use on the applicant's personal profile. It may be the applicant's home station if he / she is temporarily away from home. The applicant and the remote site must both be located within the same DXCC entity. Use of more than one remote site or a network using multiple sites is not permitted for credit. Contacts between fully automated remotes at both or either end of a path will similarly not receive credit. See Additional Note 3 below.

- B.3.9** Contacts made with a station that is remotely operated will count for IOTA credit if the station operator and the remote receiving / transmitting station are both located on one or a maximum two qualifying islands for the same IOTA group (i.e. neither is on the mainland) and the set-up of the remote station complies with the requirements of B.3.8 above.

- B.3.10** Contacts claimed for IOTA credit must include contemporaneous direct initiation by the operators on both sides of the contact. Unattended operations are not acceptable for IOTA credit.

- B.3.11** Credit will be given for contacts made entirely on a single mode of transmission or on a combination of modes (but not cross-mode). Where practical, endorsements for single mode transmission may be made on the submission of evidence confirming the mode, but the request should be made at the time of the first submission and of each subsequent one. If the applicant chooses a particular mode, updates will only be accepted on the same basis. However the applicant can choose to move to All Modes.

- B.3.12** Credit will not be given for cross-mode, cross-band or repeater- or satellite-aided contacts. Earth-Moon-Earth contacts will be accepted for credit.

B.4 STANDARD HF CATEGORY OF APPLICATION

- B.4.1** Applicants in the Standard HF category of application should comply with the general requirements above.

B.5 VHF / UHF CATEGORY OF APPLICATION

- B.5.1** Applicants should regard the general requirements above as applying but with the following variation:
- All contacts must be made on the 50MHz and / or higher frequency bands. (B.3.5)
 - IOTA Management will need to be satisfied that contacts were made with stations properly licensed at the time and may withhold credit if in doubt. (B.3.3)
- B.5.2** Attention is drawn to the fact that credit will not be given for contacts made with the aid of a repeater or satellite. EME contacts will be accepted for credit. (B.3.11)

¹ <http://www.iota-world.org>

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B.6 CLUB CATEGORY OF APPLICATION

B.6.1 The club category of application caters for the growing interest in the IOTA Programme by clubs, DX teams and multi-operator groups. The annual IOTA Contest, organised and managed by the RSGB, has done much to introduce hundreds of contesters to IOTA.

B.6.2 Applicants should regard the general requirements above as applying but with the following variation:

- The applicant need not be a licensed radio amateur but should be able to provide evidence of authority to represent the club / group, for example by holding the position of secretary, awards manager or team leader. (B.2.1)
- Contacts need not be made by the applicant. They should however be made by licensed amateurs who are members of the club / group at the time. (B.3.1)
- The callsign used should be one issued to the club / group. All IOTA contacts made with that callsign will normally be allowed to accrue for credit. (B.3.1)
- Where a club / group wishes to grow an IOTA score from a combination of callsigns, it must provide evidence that each callsign was clearly issued to it – copies of licences should be submitted on the first occasion. (B.3.1)
- A callsign issued personally to a club / group member may be used to feed a score in the Club Category in circumstances where the applicant would not, or would no longer, be eligible to apply under the Standard HF category of application. (B.3.1)

Note that all contacts need to be made from the same DXCC entity.

B.6.3 Clubs / groups are asked to keep their compliance with these provisions as transparent as possible. Checkpoints will not be able to engage in detailed correspondence.

B.7 SWL CATEGORY OF APPLICATION

B.7.1 Applicants should regard the general requirements above as applying but with the following variation:

- The applicant should be an SWL holding a standard SWL number from a national or international amateur radio society which he / she uses when sending an SWL report. If the applicant is, or subsequently becomes, a licensed radio amateur, he / she should as a general rule submit cards made out to the SWL number, and not to the amateur radio callsign. (B.2.1)
- The term 'two-way radio contact' should be read as 'two-way radio contacts heard personally'. (C.1.1)
- Each outgoing SWL report should list at least two and preferably three QSOs heard.
- Incoming QSL cards submitted for credit should list the callsign and contact details of at least one and preferably two QSOs. Island stations are asked to note these requirements when replying to SWL reports. If an SWL submits a card that fails to give the callsign of the station reported in QSO, he / she should provide a separate note of this information to the Checkpoint.

B.7.2 IOTA Management regards maintenance of the overall integrity of the IOTA Programme as being of paramount importance. It reserves the right to deny credit for a card

submitted where it is known from well-equipped amateurs in the area that the IOTA station concerned was not being received with intelligible signals at the time. It will not hesitate to take similar action if a search on DX Packet-Cluster™ or other Internet sources reveals a high degree of matching details suggesting irregular practice.

C QSL CARDS

C.1 REQUIREMENTS FOR QSL CARDS SUBMITTED

C.1.1 QSL cards submitted **must** confirm two-way radio contact and specify the date, time, band and mode used.

C.1.2 QSL cards submitted **must** have printed on them both the operation callsign and the name of the island from which the operation took place. The latter **must** be an island mentioned as qualifying for the claimed IOTA group in the island listings in the latest IOTA Directory or on the IOTA web-site. The IOTA group name and IOTA reference number are not acceptable alternatives although it is desirable that they also appear on the card, nor are geographic co-ordinates, a grid locator square or a light-house or castle name. The name of the island should not have been handwritten, nor should it have been added in a way that makes ambiguous the location of the station at the time of contact.

Note 1: A card mentioning the name of an 'officially recognised island group', for example the Balearics, but not the name of the exact island from which the operation took place, will be accepted but only if all islands in the group are known to meet the IOTA qualification requirements and there is only one possible reference number for which the group can qualify.

Note 2: A card mentioning an unlisted small island, islet or rock which is a satellite of a larger listed island will be accepted for credit if it meets IOTA qualification requirements in its own right and the name of the parent island is also mentioned prominently on the card. Card recipients should enter the parent island name on the on-line submission. The term 'satellite' is to be construed as a small island lying within 200 metres (219 yards) of a larger listed island.

Note 3: A card mentioning an island with an unofficial or obviously fabricated name will not be accepted for credit unless its exact location is clear from other information on the card and the island belongs to an 'officially recognised island group', all islands of which are known to meet the IOTA qualification requirements, and there is only one possible reference number for which the group can qualify. Card recipients should enter the island group name on the on-line submission.

A note on the reasoning behind the requirement that the island name must be printed on the QSL card is given at Additional Note 4 below.

C.1.3 QSL cards for operations prior to 1 January 2001:

Checkpoints have some discretion to accept cards for operations prior to 1 January 2001 that fall short of meeting the requirements of paragraph C.1.2 above where the operation is known to them. This discretion extends, for example, to accepting a card with a handwritten island name or one that mentions, instead of the island, the name of a town or city on the island or, in the case of Antarctica, the name of a recognised research base. It does **not** extend to accepting a card that mentions an unlisted island or just a reference number. Card recipients may need to research a map to establish the correct island name for entering on the on-line submission.

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C.1.4 Concession for VHF / UHF operations: Given that the VHF / UHF community is less aware of IOTA rules about printed island names on QSL cards, the discretion on acceptance given Checkpoints in paragraph C.1.3 will be extended to VHF / UHF cards without any restriction as to date of contact. Location indicators such as geographic coordinates and grid locators will be factors taken into account. This decision will be reviewed at regular intervals.

C.1.5 Wherever possible, submit QSL cards that are likely to cause least problems for your Checkpoint. Cards from recent operations are more easily processed than old cards from several decades ago. Clean cards, with the island name and IOTA reference number prominently displayed in large print, are likely to be the most welcome while cards that are 'messy' or very likely not to meet the requirements are the least welcome – in fact the latter should not be submitted at all. Checkpoints do the job voluntarily, so they do deserve your consideration.

C.1.6 Photocopies of QSL cards and electronic cards (eQSLs) are not acceptable for credit.

C.1.7 A warning note, do not amend a QSL card in any way, however justified you believe your action to be to rectify an omission or error made by the writer. This could lead to rejection of a card which otherwise might have been accepted, or, where deception is suspected, to your disqualification from the programme.

C.1.8 Applicants should realise that on occasions Checkpoints will have no option but to reject a card pending the receipt of more information about the operation concerned. In such a case a letter from the island operator may provide the only acceptable solution – it will normally be for the applicant to obtain this. On other occasions also Checkpoints may need to withhold credit on instructions from IOTA Management for reasons that will be explained. Applicants' cooperation and understanding are requested at all times.

D GUIDING PRINCIPLES

D.1 The IOTA Programme was devised in 1964 by Geoff Watts, a leading English short wave listener. When in 1985 RSGB took it over at his request, the Society decided that any changes it considered necessary to introduce would not go against certain key principles that underpinned the programme that Geoff had created. It remains IOTA Management's view that this is the right approach. These key principles are:

- the programme is essentially one of personal achievement and this means that all contacts should be made personally by the applicant;
- contacts are valid only if made between the applicant and an operator land-based on an island that is accepted as qualifying;
- the need for a level playing-field requires the applicant to make all contacts from the same DXCC entity and in a way that is not considered as giving unfair advantage in the performance listings; and
- management of the programme is based largely on trust and any faking of island locations, contacts or cards could lead to disqualification from further participation in IOTA.

E IOTA MANAGEMENT'S DISCRETION

E.1 GENERAL

E.1.1 From time to time IOTA Management will review the Central IOTA Database of island credits and may find it necessary to delete a very small number of them. This will generally be where a checking error has been made, where serious doubt has been cast on the location of a particular station, or where a printing error on the card has come to light. Management will endeavour to inform programme participants of any change to their record.

E.1.2 IOTA Management attaches importance to the maintenance of fair play as far as is practicable. From time to time a set of circumstances occurs where official intervention is considered justified. One such case is where there is seen to be apparent intentional unfair, even discriminatory, treatment of people in the making of contacts or issue of QSL cards or QSO matches. An example of this is where an expedition to a rare IOTA group follows a clear practice of discriminating against contacts with non-participants in the IOTA Programme or, post-event, of deleting them from the log. In this regard the cardinal principle to be followed must be that it is immaterial whether the contact is a known participant or not in IOTA. Failure to observe fair play in cases like this is sufficient justification for rejection of the operation for IOTA credit on grounds of it bringing the IOTA Programme into disrepute. All participants are asked to have regard for our long-established tradition of acting in accordance with the best of ham spirit.

E.1.3 IOTA is a programme designed to increase activity on the air. The Management Team and Checkpoints are volunteers. They put in countless hours of effort, particularly in the checking of QSL cards and handling of certificate claims. Painstaking care is taken at all times, not least to resolve any cases of doubt. The credibility of the award programme is largely due to their efforts. From time to time the checking process leads IOTA Management to question the validity of a QSL. When this occurs, it will seek further information, including on occasion copies of logs or log extracts, from the card-holder himself or the island operator. It considers that, since it manages the IOTA Programme, it has the right to require such information. All participants in the programme are expected to co-operate in providing on request such information as is judged to be within their control. When non-co-operation occurs and, more so, when award rules are broken, the overall integrity of the programme is judged of primary importance.

E.1.4 The decision of IOTA Management is final.

ADDITIONAL NOTES

NOTE 1 (B.2.1 & B.3.1)

"For credit to be given in the Standard HF and VHF / UHF categories applicants should make all contacts personally using the valid amateur radio callsign issued to them."

Contacts by another operator, whether using your equipment or not, are not valid for credit in these categories of application.

If you wish to submit credits that bear a different call-sign, in the same DXCC entity, from the one with which you have registered on the Central IOTA Database, the following rules apply.

B.2.1.1 Credit for contacts in the Standard HF and VHF / UHF categories of application may be given:

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- if the callsign in question was previously issued to you personally but has now been relinquished or is no longer in use – this is conditional on confirmation in QRZ.com, HamCall.net or similar evidence;
- if your registered callsign has required a change following a temporary or permanent move to a different region of the DXCC entity;
- if your registered callsign has been temporarily changed following a general dispensation from the licensing authority to commemorate a special event (Queen's Birthday, National or Independence Day, etc);
- if an additional current callsign was issued to you personally on a permanent basis with the same licensing conditions as your registered callsign – this is conditional on:
 - your providing a copy of your licence to your Checkpoint showing this to be the case (with English translation),
 - the call being confirmed as yours in QRZ.com or HamCall.net or similar evidence,
 - all contacts with the callsign being made by you personally,
 - this being the only additional current callsign used for claiming credits for your registered callsign, and
 - the circumstances in B.2.1.2 below not applying.

B.2.1.2 Credit for contacts in the Standard HF and VHF / UHF categories of application will not be given:

- if the additional callsign has been issued to you on behalf of a club, organisation, team, or other similar body, i.e. not restricted to you for private use;
- if the additional callsign bears a club callsign prefix or suffix;
- if the additional callsign has been issued for a limited-period special event, contest or DXpedition, including where there has been, or is authorised by the licence to be, multi-operator mode operation; or
- if, despite the terms of B.2.1.1 above, the credit or credits claimed were at a time when evidence shows that you were using your registered or additional current callsign to participate as a multi-operator station in a special event, contest or DXpedition.

B.2.1.3 Holders of an additional current callsign in the same DXCC entity may not open a second record in the Standard HF category of application on the Central IOTA Database.

NOTE 2 (B.3.2)

"All contacts must be made from the same DXCC entity and from a land-based location."

From time to time there has been a request for the 'same DXCC entity' requirement to be dropped on the grounds that an increasing number of people engage in IOTA operations overseas and that, at the same time as they are giving out IOTA contacts, to deny them the chance of feeding their home station score with a contact with a 'needed' IOTA made from their overseas location is unfair. Similarly there are those who experience a change of employment or retirement location which takes them abroad for longer periods and to ask them to start their IOTA score afresh is harsh. To yield to this request would disadvantage the vast majority of participants who play according to the current rules. In most cases a change of DXCC entity, however temporary or permanent, is a life-style choice rather than a decision

forced upon the person concerned. It is not unreasonable to expect those contemplating an overseas visit to consider the impact of such a decision on their participation in IOTA and, in the case of a short visit, to arrange their dates to best effect.

NOTE 3 (B.3.8)

"Contacts made by the applicant using a single remote receiving or transmitting site are accepted for credit if the remote site is land-based, contained within a 500 metre (547 yard) radius circle, not located more than 100 kilometres (62 statute miles) from the applicant's location and is nominated as being in use on the applicant's personal profile. It may be the applicant's home station if he / she is temporarily away from home. The applicant and the remote site must both be located within the same DXCC entity. Use of more than one remote site or a network using multiple sites is not permitted for credit. Contacts between fully automated remotes at both or either end of a path will similarly not receive credit."

IOTA Management is aware of the social needs in society and that for some people continued engagement in amateur radio through access to a remote station can make all the difference. In particular, some participants want to make IOTA contacts from their place of work or while on the move, using their home station as the remote. Also residents of retirement homes, folk who have downsized their homes and those who are space- and / or equipment-challenged can all benefit. Setting a limit of 100 kilometres should provide adequate scope in most cases for the siting and / or use of a remote station.

Propagation at the two ends of a 100 kilometre path is seldom likely to be sufficiently different as to affect the chances of an IOTA contact on the main HF / LF bands. The proposal occasionally made that there should be no restriction on remote operation so long as it remains within licence conditions cannot be accepted as this would be 'pushing the envelope' and regularly disadvantaging other participants. Unrestricted use of multiple remote sites or a network using multiple sites means effectively multiple location / station use rather than the single location / station use envisaged by Geoff Watts, the programme's founder, and the practice of using a remote station at distances of thousands of kilometres, perhaps even in a different DXCC entity, would remove all semblance of a level playing-field in fairly obvious ways. The argument that it uses technology to make contacts that would not otherwise be possible may be true but this is not IOTA in the sense that most participants wish it to be. The further argument that such a rule is largely unenforceable is probably also true but trust and the consequences of faking valid IOTA contacts apply here. Applicants are required to state whether they use a remote station on their registration profile.

NOTE 4 (C.1.2)

*"QSL cards submitted **must** have printed on them both the operation callsign and the name of the island from which the operation took place. The latter **must** be an island mentioned as qualifying for the claimed IOTA group in the island listings in the latest IOTA Directory or on the IOTA web-site."*

It is not widely known that in the months leading up to his handing over IOTA to the RSGB Geoff Watts introduced the following rule to apply to operations from 1985: *"The name of the island or group (or other identification) must appear on the QSL. Cards with hand-written / type-written / rubber-stamped 'island' will not be accepted."* For reasons of difficulty in getting an acceptable level of compliance IOTA Management delayed full implementation of this rule change (even then 'rubber-stamped' was accepted) until late 2000 and then applied it only to operations taking place from 1 January 2001. The reason given was that,

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with the increased card volumes experienced, quicker throughput was required and this meant card-checking without the need for Checkpoints to refer to atlases, maps and other data or to IOTA Management for a decision. Hence our insistence on cards having printed on them the name of the island from which the operation took place and that this must be an island listed in the latest IOTA Directory.

The decision not to accept cards that had the island name handwritten stemmed from the practical difficulties of operating a decentralised system of card-checking where decisions could vary according to individual people's judgement on the accuracy or origin of such annotations and from IOTA Management's view in principle that neither Checkpoints nor it should be put in a position of having to make such judgements. Island operators are regularly advised of the alternatives to getting cards specially printed (the preferred solution) – they can have existing cards overprinted or rubber-stamped individually with the island name and additional wording to remove ambiguity, or they can print the island name on their computerised QSL labels.