

United Kingdom Overseas Territories Aviation Circular

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65-3

Language Proficiency

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GENERAL

Overseas Territories Aviation Circulars are issued to provide advice, guidance and information on standards, practices and procedures necessary to support Overseas Territory Aviation Requirements. They are not in themselves law but may amplify a provision of the Air Navigation (Overseas Territories) Order or provide practical guidance on meeting a requirement contained in the Overseas Territories Aviation Requirements.

PURPOSE

This Circular provides guidance on the Personnel Licensing Language Proficiency requirements arising from ICAO Annex 1.

RELATED REQUIREMENTS

This Circular relates to OTAR Parts 61, 63 and 65.

CHANGE INFORMATION

Second issue.

ENQUIRIES

Enquiries regarding the content of this Circular should be addressed to Air Safety Support International at the address on the ASSI website www.airsafety.aero or to the appropriate Overseas Territory Aviation Authority.

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 In March 2003, ICAO amended Annex 1 to the Convention on International Civil Aviation to include a requirement for all aeroplane, airship, helicopter pilots, flight navigators, air traffic controllers and aeronautical station operators to demonstrate proficiency in their command of the languages that they use for radiotelephony communication. A proficiency scale of 1 to 6 is specified, with Level 6 being the standard of a native speaker of the language (See Appendix A).
- 1.2 ICAO Annex 1 specifies the minimum standard for the holder of a licence to be Level 4. It also specifies that licence holders assessed as Level 4 or 5 shall be re-tested periodically but that a person assessed as Level 6 need not be re-tested. The maximum periods between tests stated in the ICAO documents for Levels 4 and 5 are recommendations only. If the language proficiency of an individual is assessed as being below Level 4 (i.e. 1, 2 or 3) that individual may not hold a licence that includes radiotelephony privileges. The ICAO standards apply to the language “used for radio communication”; ICAO permits languages other than English in circumstances where flight crew and air traffic controllers share another common language.

2 Application

- 2.1 The applicant for a language proficiency endorsement shall demonstrate at least an ICAO Level 4 of language proficiency both in the use of phraseologies and plain language. To do so, the applicant shall demonstrate the ability to:
- (a) communicate effectively in voice-only (telephone/radiotelephone) and in face-to-face situations;
 - (b) communicate on common, concrete and work-related topics with accuracy and clarity;
 - (c) use appropriate communicative strategies to exchange messages and to recognise and resolve misunderstandings (e.g. to check, confirm or clarify information) in a general or work-related context;
 - (d) handle successfully and with relative ease the linguistic challenges presented by a complication or unexpected turn of events that occurs within the context of a routine work situation or communicative task with which they are otherwise familiar; and
 - (e) use a dialect or accent which is intelligible to the aeronautical community.
- 2.2 Testing for language proficiency will normally take place alongside initial training towards the grant of a personnel licence and application for a language proficiency endorsement should be made to the relevant Overseas Territories Aviation Authority (OTAA) as part of the personnel licence issue process.
- 2.3 Except for flight crew or air traffic controllers who have demonstrated language proficiency at an ICAO level 6, the language proficiency endorsement shall be re-evaluated every:
- (a) 4 years, if the level demonstrated is operational level (Level 4); or

(b) 6 years, if the level demonstrated is extended level (Level 5). |

2.4 An application for re-testing for individuals with Level 4 or 5 endorsements should be made in accordance with paragraph 3.

3 Methods of Testing

3.1 Through a Language School

Applicants who choose to be tested by a language school should verify that the school is approved by or is acceptable to the appropriate OTAA for the purpose of language assessment.

3.2 At a Training Organisation

Many approved Training Organisations offer language training modules that meet the requirements of the Personnel Licensing OTARs as part of an individual's overall training package. Language proficiency may be determined by this means where the Training Organisation is approved by the appropriate OTAA for the purpose.

3.3 Other Acceptable Means

Language proficiency may also be assessed by other means acceptable to the appropriate OTAA. Such means of assessment may be determined by an operator or organisation to make efficient use of their own resources, but in any case, must be approved by the appropriate OTAA and meet the requirements of OTAR Part before being put into effect.

4 Recognition of Language Proficiency Endorsements from other National Aviation Authorities

The requirement for obtaining a language proficiency endorsement can be satisfied through an appropriate language proficiency endorsement issued by an ICAO Contracting State which has confirmed compliance with ICAO; a full list is available at <https://www.icao.int/safety/fsix/Pages/lpcompliance1.aspx> |

Appendix A

ATTACHMENT A ICAO LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY RATING SCALE

1.1 Expert, extended and operational levels

LEVEL	PRONUNCIATION <i>Assumes a dialect and/or accent intelligible to the aeronautical community.</i>	STRUCTURE <i>Relevant grammatical structures and sentence patterns are determined by language functions appropriate to the task.</i>	VOCABULARY	FLUENCY	COMPREHENSION	INTERACTIONS
Expert 6	Pronunciation, stress, rhythm, and intonation, though possibly influenced by the first language or regional variation, almost never interfere with ease of understanding.	Both basic and complex grammatical structures and sentence patterns are consistently well controlled.	Vocabulary range and accuracy are sufficient to communicate effectively on a wide variety of familiar and unfamiliar topics. Vocabulary is idiomatic, nuanced, and sensitive to register.	Able to speak at length with a natural, effortless flow. Varies speech flow for stylistic effect, e.g. to emphasize a point. Uses appropriate discourse markers and connectors spontaneously.	Comprehension is consistently accurate in nearly all contexts and includes comprehension of linguistic and cultural subtleties.	Interacts with ease in nearly all situations. Is sensitive to verbal and non-verbal cues and responds to them appropriately.
Extended 5	Pronunciation, stress, rhythm, and intonation, though influenced by the first language or regional variation, rarely interfere with ease of understanding.	Basic grammatical structures and sentence patterns are consistently well controlled. Complex structures are attempted but with errors which sometimes interfere with meaning.	Vocabulary range and accuracy are sufficient to communicate effectively on common, concrete, and work-related topics. Paraphrases consistently and successfully. Vocabulary is sometimes idiomatic.	Able to speak at length with relative ease on familiar topics but may not vary speech flow as a stylistic device. Can make use of appropriate discourse markers or connectors.	Comprehension is accurate on common, concrete, and work-related topics and mostly accurate when the speaker is confronted with a linguistic or situational complication or an unexpected turn of events. Is able to comprehend a range of speech varieties (dialect and/or accent) or registers.	Responses are immediate, appropriate, and informative. Manages the speaker/listener relationship effectively.
Operational 4	Pronunciation, stress, rhythm, and intonation are influenced by the first language or regional variation but only sometimes interfere with ease of understanding.	Basic grammatical structures and sentence patterns are used creatively and are usually well controlled. Errors may occur, particularly in unusual or unexpected circumstances, but rarely interfere with meaning.	Vocabulary range and accuracy are usually sufficient to communicate effectively on common, concrete, and work-related topics. Can often paraphrase successfully when lacking vocabulary in unusual or unexpected circumstances.	Produces stretches of language at an appropriate tempo. There may be occasional loss of fluency on transition from rehearsed or formulaic speech to spontaneous interaction, but this does not prevent effective communication. Can make limited use of discourse markers or connectors. Fillers are not distracting.	Comprehension is mostly accurate on common, concrete, and work-related topics when the accent or variety used is sufficiently intelligible for an international community of users. When the speaker is confronted with a linguistic or situational complication or an unexpected turn of events, comprehension may be slower or require clarification strategies.	Responses are usually immediate, appropriate, and informative. Initiates and maintains exchanges even when dealing with an unexpected turn of events. Deals adequately with apparent misunderstandings by checking, confirming, or clarifying.

Levels 1, 2 and 3 are on subsequent page

1.2 Pre-operational, elementary and pre-elementary levels

LEVEL	PRONUNCIATION <i>Assumes a dialect and/or accent intelligible to the aeronautical community.</i>	STRUCTURE <i>Relevant grammatical structures and sentence patterns are determined by language functions appropriate to the task.</i>	VOCABULARY	FLUENCY	COMPREHENSION	INTERACTIONS
<i>Levels 4, 5 and 6 are on preceding page.</i>						
Pre-operational 3	Pronunciation, stress, rhythm, and intonation are influenced by the first language or regional variation and frequently interfere with ease of understanding.	Basic grammatical structures and sentence patterns associated with predictable situations are not always well controlled. Errors frequently interfere with meaning.	Vocabulary range and accuracy are often sufficient to communicate on common, concrete, or work-related topics, but range is limited and the word choice often inappropriate. Is often unable to paraphrase successfully when lacking vocabulary.	Produces stretches of language, but phrasing and pausing are often inappropriate. Hesitations or slowness in language processing may prevent effective communication. Fillers are sometimes distracting.	Comprehension is often accurate on common, concrete, and work-related topics when the accent or variety used is sufficiently intelligible for an international community of users. May fail to understand a linguistic or situational complication or an unexpected turn of events.	Responses are sometimes immediate, appropriate, and informative. Can initiate and maintain exchanges with reasonable ease on familiar topics and in predictable situations. Generally inadequate when dealing with an unexpected turn of events.
Elementary 2	Pronunciation, stress, rhythm, and intonation are heavily influenced by the first language or regional variation and usually interfere with ease of understanding.	Shows only limited control of a few simple memorized grammatical structures and sentence patterns.	Limited vocabulary range consisting only of isolated words and memorized phrases.	Can produce very short, isolated, memorized utterances with frequent pausing and a distracting use of fillers to search for expressions and to articulate less familiar words.	Comprehension is limited to isolated, memorized phrases when they are carefully and slowly articulated.	Response time is slow and often inappropriate. Interaction is limited to simple routine exchanges.
Pre-elementary 1	Performs at a level below the Elementary level.	Performs at a level below the Elementary level.	Performs at a level below the Elementary level.	Performs at a level below the Elementary level.	Performs at a level below the Elementary level.	Performs at a level below the Elementary level.

Note.— The Operational Level (Level 4) is the minimum required proficiency level for radiotelephony communication. Levels 1 through 3 describe Pre-elementary, Elementary, and Preoperational levels of language proficiency, respectively, all of which describe a level of proficiency below the ICAO language proficiency requirement. Levels 5 and 6 describe Extended and Expert levels, at levels of proficiency more advanced than the minimum required Standard. As a whole, the scale will serve as benchmarks for training and testing, and in assisting candidates to attain the ICAO Operational Level (Level 4).