



# PTD 1001 ATO POLICIES AND PROCEDURES HANDBOOK

## **WARNING**

Information contained in this document is intended for flight simulation purposes only.

# Table of Contents

<b>A. Control Pages.....</b>	<b>3</b>
ATO Policies and Procedures Handbook.....	3
Revision Records.....	4
Related Documents.....	6
<b>1 Preface.....</b>	<b>9</b>
1.1 Introductory Remarks.....	9
1.2 Purpose and Scope.....	9
1.3 Relevant VATSIM Policies.....	9
<b>2 VATSIM Pilot Training Department.....</b>	<b>10</b>
2.1 Pilot Training Department Mission and Goals.....	10
2.2 Role of VP Pilot Training and Pilot Training Department.....	10
2.3 Authorized Training Organizations.....	10
2.4 Pilot Training Department and ATO Definitions.....	11
2.5 PTD and ATO Coordination/Communication.....	12
2.7 Language of Operations.....	12
<b>3 Authorized Training Organization Requirements.....</b>	<b>15</b>
3.1 ATO Website.....	15
3.2 Personnel.....	15
3.3 Training Programmes.....	17
3.4 Instructional and Testing Facilities.....	18
3.5 Record Keeping.....	18
3.6 ATO Quality Assessment and Improvement Process.....	19
3.7 Conflict Resolution.....	20
3.8 ATO Operations Manual.....	20
<b>4 Pilot Rating Examinations.....</b>	<b>22</b>
4.1 Theoretical Knowledge (Written) Examinations.....	22
4.2 Practical Examinations (Skills Tests).....	23
<b>5 ATO Certification Process (New ATOs Start Here!).....</b>	<b>24</b>
5.1 ATO Application for Operation.....	24
5.2 ATO Application for Operation Review.....	25
5.3 Authorization to Operate.....	26
5.4 Additional Pilot Rating Certification.....	26
5.5 Alternative Means of Compliance.....	26
5.6 Periodic Review Process.....	26
5.7 Revocation of ATO Authorization.....	27

## A. Control Pages

ATO Policies and Procedures Handbook

Document Identification	
<b>Type</b>	Policy
<b>Version</b>	3
<b>Origin Date</b>	17 Jul 2023
<b>Effective Date</b>	1 Jan 2024
<b>Scope</b>	This policy applies to all of the constituent components that comprise Authorized Training Organizations of the VATSIM network. It applies to all levels of the organization, including, but not limited to, the Chief Flight Instructor, Responsible Representative, Instructors, Support Staff and students.
<b>Prepared by</b>	Simon Kelsey
<b>Approved by</b>	Pilot Training Department
<b>Review date</b>	1 Jan 2025
<b>Identification</b>	ATO Policies and Procedures Handbook

Revision Records

Rev	Date	Description of Change	Author
0.1	1 May 2013	Original Draft	D. Patel
0.2	15 May 2013	Review draft (minor corrections, added ATO sect.)	D. Patel
0.3	1 Jun 2013	Consultation draft (corrections and CFI ratings)	D. Patel
1.0	15 Jun 2013	Release version prerequisites, standards removed to separate doc, new section 2.6, clarification of non-partner VAVSO activities as ATO	D. Patel
1.1	4 Mar 2019	CFI contact requirements and formatting	E. Hawes
1.2	29 Mar 2019	Updated VA ATO requirements, audit process Un-Sat 30 day limit, waiver records, and GDPR compliance in multiple areas	E. Hawes
1.3	6 Mar 2020	Overhaul of new application process, updated sections to be in compliance with new Membership Certification Standards, New pilot rating system, and other formatting updates and improvements	E. Hawes
1.4	13 Mar 2020	Fixed typos and updated EOD title	S. Nixon
2	31 Oct 2022	Major overhaul of ATO requirements, nominated post holder responsibilities, training programme requirements and ATO application process. Examination requirements updated to align with FE policy. Removed Pilot Ratings section as now in PTD Policy.	S. Kelsey
3	1 Jan 2024	1.1 Editorial changes only 2.4.3 Editorial changes only 2.4.4 Remove references to VSO as these are now covered separately 2.4.6 Add Military ATO	S. Kelsey

		<p>2.4.7 Remove distinction between unrestricted and membership ATOs</p> <p>2.5.1 Remove paragraph regarding non-English speaking CFIs and ATOs</p> <p>2.7 Add Language of Operations policy</p> <p>3.0 Clarification of AMC/AltMoC process</p> <p>3.2.2 Confirm requirement for CFIs to hold P5 rating</p> <p>3.2.3 Confirm requirement for instructors to hold P5 rating</p> <p>3.2.4 Delete 'Examiners' paragraph as Examiner policy is governed by PTD 1100</p> <p>3.2.4 Delete references to Examiners</p> <p>3.5.0 Editorial changes only</p> <p>3.5.1 Editorial changes only</p> <p>3.7 Delete outdated reference to VATSIM CoC</p> <p>4.1 Add requirement for theory questions to be referenced to the MCS</p> <p>4.2 Add requirement for candidates to be recommended for test</p> <p>Add clarification for process if ATO does not have an eligible examiner in-house</p> <p>4.3 Delete Practical Examination Methods as governed by PTD 1100</p> <p>4.4 Delete Practical Examination Records and Outcomes as governed by PTD 1100</p> <p>5.0 Editorial changes only</p>	

*Related Documents*

<b>Document Name</b>	<b>Document Identification</b>
PTD 1000	Pilot Training Department Policy
PTD 1200-1600	Member Certification Standards
PTD 1100	Policy and Guidance for Flight Examiners
PTD 2001	Application for the Initial Approval of Training Organizations

## *List of Abbreviations*

AFI	Assistant Flight Instructor
AltMoC	Alternative Means of Compliance
AMC	Acceptable Means of Compliance
ARTCC	Air Route Traffic Control Center
ATO	Authorized Training Organization
ATPL	Airline Transport Pilot Licence (P4 Rating)
BoG	Board of Governors
CFI	Chief Flight Instructor
CID	Computer Identification number (VATSIM ID number)
CMEL	Commercial Multi Engine Licence (P3 Rating)
CoC	Code of Conduct
CoR	Code of Regulations
EU	European Union
FE	Flight Examiner
FI	Flight Instructor
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
ICAO	International Civil Aviation Organisation
IR	Instrument Rating (P2 Rating)
MCS	Member Certification Standards
POI	Primary Operations Inspector
PPL	Private Pilot Licence (P1 Rating)
PRAMS	Pilot Rating and ATO Management System
PTD	Pilot Training Department
QA	Quality Assurance
RR	Responsible Representative
TK	Theoretical Knowledge
UA	User Agreement
VA	Virtual Airline

vACC	Virtual Area Control Centre
VATSIM	Virtual Air Traffic Simulation Network
VP	Vice President
VPPLT	Vice President, Pilot Training
VSO	VATSIM Special Operations Organisation



# 1 Preface

## 1.1 *Introductory Remarks*

From its founding in 2001, the Virtual Air Traffic Simulation Network (VATSIM) has provided flight simulation enthusiasts with a remarkably immersive online experience. With over 110,000 active participants, VATSIM has always emphasized the importance of providing quality training to its ATC controllers. In 2009, that commitment to training and development was extended through a voluntary program of pilot ratings that provided individuals with the opportunity to train pilot skills online and demonstrate those skills at increasing levels of specialization and proficiency.

## 1.2 *Purpose and Scope*

This handbook sets forth the policies and procedures under which the Pilot Training Department, led by the Vice President Pilot Training (a member of the VATSIM Board of Governors) administers the voluntary VATSIM pilot rating system in partnership with a network of Authorized Training Organizations (ATOs). The intent of this handbook is to bring VATSIM Pilot Training Department and VATSIM Network policies together in one document, outlining operational requirements for Authorized Training Organizations, eliminating unnecessary duplication, enhancing consistency, and providing clarity for both students and trainers. Corrections and suggestions concerning this manual should be directed to [vpplt@vatsim.net](mailto:vpplt@vatsim.net).

## 1.3 *Relevant VATSIM Policies*

All activity on the VATSIM network is subject to VATSIM policies, codes and agreements, including, but not limited to, the Code of Regulations (CoR), Code of Conduct (CoC), User Agreement (UA), and Privacy Policy.

## 2 VATSIM Pilot Training Department

The Pilot Training Department (PTD) of VATSIM operates under the direction of the Vice President Pilot Training (VPPLT, VATGOV13). Unless otherwise stated herein, reference to the Vice President Pilot Training shall also encompass his/her design.

### 2.1 Pilot Training Department Mission and Goals

The mission of VATSIM can well be described in terms of the following quotation taken from the preamble to its Code of Conduct:

*“VATSIM is an online community created for enthusiasts of flight simulation and air traffic control. One of the main goals of VATSIM is to create an environment which is fun and, at the same time, educational and a realistic simulation of procedures followed by pilots and air traffic controllers everyday around the world.”*

The PTD is responsible for creating effective access to efficient, scalable, and sustainable training opportunities for VATSIM’s pilots. In partnership with Authorized Training Organizations (ATOs), the department supervises VATSIM pilot certification programs that enhance pilot and controller satisfaction with their online experiences, thereby increasing participant recruitment and retention by the VATSIM community.

### 2.2 Role of VP Pilot Training and Pilot Training Department

The Board of Governors (BoG) is the governing body for all VATSIM rules and regulations. That board has delegated to VPPLT the authority to govern and regulate its pilot training program. VPPLT acts on behalf of the BoG in all matters pertaining to the pilot training program. The actions of VPPLT can only be superseded by a vote of the BoG members meeting all governance guidelines set forth in the VATSIM Code of Regulations.

VPPLT and PTD:

- Promote the training of VATSIM pilots at all levels of experience using both internal and qualified third party (ATO) resources
- Govern and regulate ATO requirements, as well as ATO certification and recertification
- Design, implement, and maintain the VATSIM Pilot Training and Certification system
- Conduct periodic reviews and audits ensuring the quality of all VATSIM training activities
- Provide a global platform of pilot recognition for having achieved demonstrated skill in online aviation at different levels in a voluntary program

### 2.3 Authorized Training Organizations

Authorized Training Organizations (ATOs) are third-party groups established for the purpose of providing training toward VATSIM Pilot Ratings. ATOs are approved and regulated by the Pilot Training Department in accordance with the provisions of this handbook. Members who successfully complete a PTD approved pilot rating training program are awarded the pilot rating

associated with that program. The standards associated with each pilot rating are defined by the Pilot Training Department and published in Member Certification Standards Documents.

## 2.4 Pilot Training Department and ATO Definitions

An **Authorized Training Organization (ATO)** is certified by VATSIM's Pilot Training Department to provide training toward VATSIM pilot ratings in accordance with VATSIM PTD approved pilot training programs. ATOs may choose to offer only select VATSIM pilot ratings.

### 2.4.1 Responsible Representative

ATOs must designate a **Responsible Representative (RR)**. The Responsible Representative forms the main administrative point of contact between the PTD and the ATO. The duties and responsibilities of the Responsible Representative are outlined in 3.2.1 below.

### 2.4.2 Chief Flight Instructor

Each ATO must also designate a **Chief Flight Instructor (CFI)** to oversee the content and delivery of the ATO's training programmes. The duties and responsibilities of the CFI are outlined in 3.2.2 below. The posts of CFI and Responsible Representative may be held by the same individual.

### 2.4.3 Flight Examiner

An individual holding a VATSIM Flight Examiner (P6) rating who is approved by the Pilot Training Department to conduct practical examinations ("Skill Tests") for the issue of VATSIM Pilot Ratings, and to process Pilot Rating upgrades for candidates whom they have examined via the Pilot Rating ATO Management System (PRAMS).

### 2.4.4 Virtual Airline ATO

**VATSIM partner Virtual Airlines (VA)** are third party organizations independent of VATSIM that organize virtual pilots to fly on the VATSIM network. Approved VA/VSO organizations may apply for and receive authorization to become ATOs in order to issue VATSIM pilot ratings to VATSIM members. These organizations must continue to maintain approval under the VATSIM Virtual Airline program at all times to maintain ATO status.

### 2.4.5 Independent ATO

**Independent ATOs** are third party organizations that are established independent of the VATSIM PTD. These may be hosted by VATSIM divisions, regions, and vACC/ARTCCs, or by non-VATSIM groups (e.g., non-partner VA/VSOs or independent flying schools) that are not affiliated with any other larger organization. Their main purpose is training VATSIM members to obtain VATSIM pilot ratings.

## 2.4.6 Military ATO

Military ATOs are VATSIM Special Operations Organisations approved to provide training toward VATSIM Military Ratings (“M ratings”). Regulation and control of Military ATOs is delegated to the VATSIM Special Operations Administration.

## 2.4.7 Pilot Rating ATO Management System (PRAMS)

The **Pilot Rating ATO Management System (PRAMS)** is the primary tool ATOs use to manage staff roles and permissions within their ATO and grant pilot ratings certifications after a member successfully completes their examination.

PRAMS can be accessed here: <https://prams.vatsim.net>

## 2.4.8 ATO Student Admission Status

It is normally anticipated that admission of new students to ATO pilot training programs will be **OPEN**.

If an ATO finds it necessary to temporarily close any of their approved pilot rating training programs to new students, the Responsible Representative must inform their designated POI within the VATSIM PTD. The affected pilot training programs will publicly be listed as **CLOSED** on the PTD ATO directory until the VATSIM PTD is notified that the temporary restriction on new students has been removed.

## 2.5 PTD and ATO Coordination/Communication

As noted elsewhere in this document, all official communications between the VATSIM PTD and ATOs will pass between the ATO’s Responsible Representative and VATSIM’s VPPLT or a designated PTD representative such as a Primary Operations Inspector. Official communications should take place via email or (by appointment at mutually agreed times) via channels such as Discord or TeamSpeak.

Official PTD notices, updates and policy changes will always be distributed to CFIs and RRs via email.

Informal communication and discussion is welcomed at all times via the Pilot Training Department Discord server which can be found on the VATSIM Community Hub (<https://community.vatsim.net>)

## 2.7 Language of Operations

VATSIM PTD operations are conducted in the standard English language as English has been the prevailing language in aviation worldwide and has been accepted as lingua franca in aviation operations.

### 2.7.1 Written communications

All written communication with PTD shall be conducted in the English language. When participants are not English speakers or cannot communicate sufficiently in English, translators can be put in service. In that case the following article is in force.

### 2.7.2 Translations

In case translations are used for the same document or any communication, either produced by human or automated translators, to avoid misconceptions the meaning of wordings in English prevails over any other translation.

### 2.7.3 Verbal communications

Verbal communications with PTD personnel may be conducted in any language if participants are adequate speakers and confident of avoiding any misunderstandings. When this cannot be guaranteed the language of communication should resolve by default to standard English. In case the participants are not English speakers or cannot communicate sufficiently in English, communication should resolve from verbal to written as per above 2.7.1.

### 2.7.4 Regulatory Documentation

#### 2.7.4.1 Documentation issued by PTD

All documentation issued by PTD shall be in standard English.

#### 2.7.4.2 Documentation issued by ATO

Any documentation that has regulatory status with the definition being that needs to be communicated to PTD and / or approved by PTD shall be in standard English. Such documents or content include but are not limited to:

1. ATO Operations Manual
2. Training programmes for Pilot Ratings
  - a. This applies to the overview of the programme structure, i.e. the programme of lessons and sequence and descriptions of exercises to be flown etc: not to briefing content or training material provided to trainees
3. Questions for Theoretical Knowledge examinations (these may be provided to trainees in the ATO's language of choice, but English translations of all questions must be made available to the PTD on request)
4. Data requested by PTD regarding ATO operations
5. Documentation of theory examination and practical test results

It is the responsibility of the ATO to ensure the English translations of documents or questions etc are accurate such that the PTD is able to carry out its regulatory functions without undue difficulty. Section 2.7.2 applies.

Any other non-regulatory document or content produced or replicated by ATOs for the benefit of their operations and deliverance of pilot training to trainees, can be in any language that is appropriate for their efficiency of the operations.

## 3 Authorized Training Organization Requirements

VATSIM's Pilot Training Department recognizes the need to encourage flexibility and experimentation in the development of online training methods and strategies for network members. As such, the PTD keeps a minimum list of requirements for ATO operations under its purview in the interest of the success for both the ATO and its students, and may provide Acceptable Means of Compliance (AMC). AMC are non-binding standards adopted by the PTD to establish compliance with its policies, procedures and VATSIM network regulations.

Since AMCs are non-binding, ATOs may choose alternative means to comply with the policies (AltMoC). In this case, however, they lose the presumption of compliance provided by PTD AMCs, and must demonstrate that they comply with all relevant policies and regulations. Any proposed AltMoC must be submitted to the PTD for approval, and approval must be gained before the AltMoC is used. The PTD is under no obligation to grant AltMoCs. Furthermore, the approval of an AltMoC to one or several ATOs does not grant that AltMoC to others unless specifically approved in writing.

### 3.1 ATO Website

Areas containing confidential material like student records must be appropriately secured. Each user must have their own individual login, secured either through a single-sign on system such as VATSIM Connect, or locally-maintained individual IDs and passwords. Confidentiality of student records must be maintained. Instructors and other ATO staff may view and edit student records, but individual students should only have access to their own records. Authorised representatives of the VATSIM PTD may be required to view student and instructor records in connection with their official duties and this access must be granted. Unauthenticated users must not have access to any personal data.

It is the ATO and Responsible Representative's responsibility to ensure member data is protected in accordance with Regulation (EU) 2016/679 (the General Data Protection Regulation).

### 3.2 Personnel

#### 3.2.1 Responsible Representative

Each ATO must nominate a **Responsible Representative (RR)**. The Responsible Representative is responsible for:

- Ensuring the ATO, its staff and students operate in accordance with all applicable PTD and VATSIM Network regulations and policies
- Notifying the PTD if for any reason the ATO is unable to comply with its obligations in respect of any of the policies within this Handbook and working with the PTD to find an acceptable alternative
- Notifying the PTD if the ATO is no longer able to operate one or all of its training programmes
- Notifying the PTD in the event of any change of CFI or Responsible Representative

- Data security within the ATO
- Ensuring the organisation is suitably resourced to achieve the above points.

The Responsible Representative is the focal point for communications between the PTD and the ATO. All PTD email communications are sent to the RR's officially listed VATSIM email address, i.e., the address that is associated with that person's VATSIM account. RRs wishing to have their emails sent to an account associated with their ATO (for example, RR.Name@myvirtualflightschool.com) must change their official VATSIM email address via their [MyVATSIM Profile](#).

### 3.2.2 Chief Flight Instructor (CFI)

Each ATO must nominate a **Chief Flight Instructor (CFI)**. The CFI is responsible for:

- Ensuring that the training provided complies with the Member Certification Standards, PTD policies and the ATO's approved training programmes
- Overall supervision of student progress and ensuring that all have successfully completed the training in accordance with the approved syllabi, PTD policies and the ATO's approved training programme
- Satisfactory integration of flight and theoretical knowledge instruction during the training courses offered by the ATO
- The adequacy of the training offered
- Monitoring and implementation of updates to the ATO's training programmes
- Monitoring the correct application of training standards by the ATO's instructional staff and thus supervision and standardisation of the ATO's instructional staff.

The CFI must be appropriately qualified and experienced for the role. This means they must:

- Hold a full VATSIM Flight Instructor (P5) or Flight Examiner (P6) Rating
- Have experience instructing in the areas relevant to the ATO's operations
- Hold VATSIM Pilot Ratings for the training courses being offered
- Have sufficient experience to administer the training activity of the ATO and fulfil the functions outlined above.

In the event that the CFI does not hold all ratings for which the ATO intends to provide training toward, he/she must nominate one or more Deputy CFIs to oversee these courses (for instance, if the ATO intends to offer training for the ATPL rating but the CFI only holds a CMEL rating, the CFI must nominate a VATSIM ATPL-rated individual to oversee the ATO's ATPL course). Deputy CFIs must meet all the requirements listed above applicable to a CFI, and are as responsible for the course(s) for which they oversee as the CFI.

### 3.2.3 ATO Staffing

The Responsible Representative may appoint as many staff members as are required to implement and operate the ATO's training programs.

All ATO instructors must:

- Hold VATSIM Pilot Ratings for the courses they are teaching, and:



- Hold a full VATSIM Flight Instructor (P5) or Flight Examiner (P6) Rating, or:
- Be a VATSIM Trainee Flight Instructor, working toward their full FI rating

### 3.2.4 Acceptance of Nominated Personnel

In assessing the suitability of a candidate to hold the role of Responsible Representative or CFI, the VATSIM PTD will consider:

- The individual's VATSIM and/or real-world flying experience, as applicable
- VATSIM (and/or real-world) Pilot Ratings held by the individual
- The individual's other relevant and instructional experience
- The individual's demonstrated compliance with the VATSIM Code of Conduct, Code of Regulations, User Agreement and all other VATSIM Network policies
- The individual's demonstrated past cooperation with the PTD and VATSIM network authorities
- The individual's demonstrated good character and integrity

In assessing these areas, the PTD will review information submitted on the ATO Application Form, as well as the individual's VATSIM account and VATSIM Statistics Centre records. The PTD may also solicit character references if considered necessary.

## 3.3 Training Programmes

A training programme is required to be submitted for each proposed course. The PTD is required to verify that each training programme, and any subsequent changes to the programme, are compliant with the applicable Member Certification Standards, and approve each programme.

A Training Programme is not simply a list of exercises/manoeuvres to be completed on a course, or a cut and paste of the MCS. It must include:

- An explanation of the purpose of the course
- Pre-entry requirements for the course and any credits for previous experience
- A list of all flight training exercises to be taught, including:
  - An objective for each specific lesson or air exercise
  - A standard to be met to achieve proficiency for each specific lesson or air exercise
  - Timing for each specific lesson or air exercise
  - An outline of the planned structure of the lesson
- Structure and content of theoretical knowledge instruction
- Any progress checks to be included in the course
- An overall syllabus summary including details of how the different elements will be integrated

Any training programme must include:

- Theoretical knowledge training covering all aspects of the Theoretical Knowledge elements of the MCS or approved model syllabus where available

- Practical training in all of the model syllabus Air Exercises or Skill elements of the MCS
- Threat and Error Management and aeronautical decision making training (integrated with practical training)

Any shortfalls or non-compliances in the training programme will be notified to the ATO which must implement the required changes and re-submit to the PTD for approval.

Any subsequent changes to the training programme after the initial approval must be submitted to the PTD for approval before they are implemented.

### *3.4 Instructional and Testing Facilities*

Online education and training requires deployment of advanced technologies. ATOs must specify how those technologies will be utilized in the implementation of their pilot rating training programs. The MCS requires students to demonstrate understanding of both theoretical and practical aspects of aviation in each pilot rating. ATOs are strongly recommended to present educational material in a variety of formats (e.g., text, image, interactive, video) using different types of learning tools ranging from simple web pages to full-featured open-source learning environments (e.g. Moodle) and even extensive custom coded solutions if desired. All learning and written examination tools must conform to the standards set forth in section 3.1 regarding storage of user data being held in compliance with GDPR.

### *3.5 Record Keeping*

ATOs must maintain student training records including any theoretical and practical examination results.

As a guide, student records should include:

- The name and VATSIM CID of each student
- Evidence of any pre-entry requirements
- A cumulative record, organised by subject, of theoretical knowledge lessons attended, or online self-study modules completed, by the student with an indication that the student has achieved proficiency in each subject and is recommended for the examination in each subject (for instance, evidence of completion of any online modules etc)
- Cumulative flying training achieved
- For each training flight, the date, the type of aircraft used, the flight time, the instructor's name and CID, the syllabus lesson/exercise number and written comments by the instructor on the student's performance, progress and other factors such as attitude and manner during the detail and the course as a whole. The record should indicate the standard achieved in relation to the laid down performance standard and any deviations from the syllabus including incomplete items. Students should be provided with a copy of each report.
- A summary of flying exercises completed with the date on which each exercise was carried out
- Summary reports with the result of any progress/phase tests, skill test and theoretical knowledge examinations, including arrangements for remedial training after failed tests/examinations

Records must be kept for the duration of a student's enrolment plus a minimum of five years subsequently.

All records must be kept in accordance with GDPR.

### 3.5.1 Transfer of Student Records

If a student, part way through a training course, wishes to transfer from one ATO to another, in accordance with GDPR it is the student's responsibility to request the transfer of a copy of their records to the new ATO. These copies must be certified as correct by the originating training organisation, and should be forwarded directly to the CFI of the new ATO within two weeks of receipt of the request.

In addition:

- Credit shall be given for all adequately documented training or examinations completed as part of an approved course
- The CFI of the new ATO shall assess the student and determine the balance of training and experience required to complete the course, and any additional training necessary to cover the transition from the previous partly-completed course
- The student shall complete the balance of all training, examinations, flight time and any additional training necessary as specified in the determination by the CFI of the new ATO.

### 3.6 ATO Quality Assessment and Improvement Process

In the interest of continued ATO improvement and success, ATOs are required to create a quality assessment and improvement process that helps increase successful training outcomes for VATSIM members pursuing pilot ratings at each level offered by the ATO. The ATO Quality Assessment and Improvement Process must be described in the initial application for ATO authorization in the ATO's Operations Manual.

It is recommended that the following areas should, at a minimum, be part of an ATO Quality Assessment and Improvement Process:

- Written examination question bank reliability and clarity
  - E.g. eliminating or rewording confusing questions that are frequently missed
- Pilot rating examination success rates
  - E.g. Updating and providing more effective training in any weak areas shown in examination results for pilot ratings. Data driven ATO improvements are highly recommended and encouraged!
- Instructor participation and effectiveness
  - E.g. holding regular standardisation meetings and providing a programme of training and continuing development for instructors
- Student satisfaction
  - E.g. surveys offered to students asking how the ATO can improve and in what areas.

Other methods of improvement will no doubt become apparent as ATOs become more familiar with the training process, so improvements to this process should always be considered. ATOs are expected to show specific efforts of quality assessment and improvement between audits.

### 3.7 Conflict Resolution

The VATSIM PTD will not normally be called upon to resolve disagreements among ATO staff members or between members of the training staff and students due to the department's ongoing workload. Each ATO must create an appropriate conflict resolution policy that designates the process that individuals may undertake to have their concerns heard and disagreements decided within the ATO itself. Conflicts or disagreements internal to ATOs should not be referred to VATSIM for resolution unless a breach of a VATSIM regulation has occurred while connected to the network.

### 3.8 ATO Operations Manual

All ATOs must create and maintain an ATO Operations Manual to ensure consistency of policy implementation among staff, students, and adherence to this the ATO Policies and Procedures Handbook. The ATO Operations Manual should define the operational functions of the ATO. This manual is considered the backbone in which an ATO operates. Please do not solely reproduce the contents of this Policy and Procedures Handbook.

#### 3.8.1 ATO Operations Manual Content Requirements

##### 3.8.1.1 Applying ATOs

An ATO Operations Manual must be submitted at the time of initial ATO application. It is already understood no approved pilot rating training programs will be listed in the initial application process. Please be sure to allow room for this required section and its items.

##### 3.8.1.2 Existing ATOs

Existing ATOs are required to continue to update their ATO's Operation Manual as updates occur. This area is evaluated on all audits.

#### 3.8.2 Operations Manual Content

At a minimum, each ATO Operations Manual should include the following:

- A brief description of the document's scope. (Who does it apply to?)
- A Record of Revisions section highlighting changes to the ATO Operations Manual, the dates they were made, and who they were made by.
- Full details of any Alternative Means of Compliance authorised by the PTD
- Definition of an ATO's management functions, e.g. Responsible Representative, Chief Flight Instructor, Deputy Chief Flight Instructor(s), Webmaster, etc., accompanied by a detailed description of each management's responsibilities and authority.
- Description of approved official ATO communications channels. This includes both among staff and with ATO students.

- List of approved pilot rating training programs offered by the ATO and links or direction to a detailed training syllabus for each. This allows staff and students to have a clear and consistent idea how pilot rating training should progress.
- Description of methods and techniques that will be used in student training and assessment.
- Outline or explanation of the ATO's Quality Control and Improvement Process.
- Outline or explanation of ATO conflict resolution and appeals process.

## 4 Pilot Rating Examinations

Examinations are seen as a primary means of ensuring competency of an individual's knowledge and/or skill. Members on the VATSIM network are all examined to one uniform set of standards across the world through the use of the Membership Certification Standards (MCS). The MCS outlines both knowledge topics and practical flying skills that must all be examined before a network member may earn their pilot rating from an ATO. Importantly, this system ultimately benefits all parties by keeping clear expectations while creating high calibre pilots. Finally, examining using the MCS as a guide also ensures that each pilot rating is held to the same standard and not degraded in value anywhere in the world. All members must be examined in both a written and practical manner.

### 4.1 Theoretical Knowledge (Written) Examinations

Theoretical Knowledge examinations play a critical role in assessing the examinee's knowledge of basic sciences, rules, and concepts of each pilot rating. The examination must be in multiple-choice format and include a minimum of 30 questions, including at least one question from EACH Task's knowledge element section. ATOs may ask more than one question regarding a task knowledge element if they chose to do so.

Example:

Task	D. Operation of Systems
Objective	To determine that the member exhibits satisfactory knowledge, risk management, and skills associated with the safe operation of systems on the airplane provided for the flight test.
Knowledge	The member demonstrates an understanding of:
PPL.I.D.K1	Airplane systems, to include:
PPL.I.D.K1a	a. Primary flight controls
PPL.I.D.K1b	b. Secondary flight controls (trim, flaps, etc.)
PPL.I.D.K1c	c. Power Plant Basic Operation (combustion process, etc)
PPL.I.D.K1d	d. Basic Electrical Components (Battery, Alternator, etc)
PPL.I.D.K1e	e. Avionics/Flight Instruments
PPL.I.D.K1h	f. Pitot-static system, vacuum system, and associated flight instruments

Question: Which of the following is the correct four-stroke sequence?

- A. Exhaust, compression, intake, power
- B. Power, compression, exhaust, intake
- C. Compression, power, intake, exhaust
- D. Intake, compression, power, exhaust

*Correct Answer: D*

The example question fulfills the requirement for all knowledge examination questions related to the task **D. Operation of Systems** on the P1 MCS. However, ATOs are encouraged to ask more questions covering the other knowledge items (Primary/Secondary Flight Controls, Pitot Static etc.) in written examinations, and question banks must include questions for **all** sub-elements such that a candidate cannot anticipate which systems they will be questioned on.

Question banks must contain a sufficient variety of questions for each MCS knowledge item to prevent rote learning and 'brute forcing' of examinations, and to ensure that a candidate re-sitting an exam is presented with a substantially different set of questions to their first attempt.

Question banks must be provided as part of the ATO application process and regularly reviewed and updated. Question banks must be made available for inspection by the PTD as required. Each question in the question bank must be referenced to the relevant MCS code.

Written examinations are only considered pass/fail status. Students must earn a 70% score on the Theoretical Knowledge examination to pass. When taking a written examination, students shall be provided in a timely way with their final score and direction towards any areas of deficiency that questions were missed to review (ideally associated with MCS knowledge codes).

**Trainees must have successfully passed all Theoretical Knowledge examinations before attempting a practical Skills Test.**

Results of all theoretical knowledge examinations, including the questions asked and answered and score, must be recorded and retained by the ATO for inspection by the PTD as required, for each candidate. This applies to failed attempts as well as passes.

## *4.2 Practical Examinations (Skills Tests)*

Practical Skills Tests must be conducted by a VATSIM Flight Examiner in accordance with the requirements of the relevant MCS and PTD 1100 requirements.

Candidates must be recommended for the Skills Test by an instructor holding a full Flight Instructor (P5) rating.

If the ATO does not have a qualified 'in house' examiner who is eligible to conduct the test, the skill test recommendation should be submitted to the ATO's POI who will allocate a suitable examiner.

## 5 ATO Certification Process (New ATOs Start Here!)

The VATSIM ATO program is designed to permit maximum flexibility to organizations desiring to provide pilot training experiences to VATSIM members. ATOs are encouraged to target their programs to the needs of their audience. VAs and flying clubs should provide training within the environment and within the rules and procedures under which their members normally fly, subject to the known limitations and accommodations of VATSIM. VATSIM PTD operations are conducted in the ICAO standard English language. ATOs wishing to provide instruction in languages other than English are still strongly encouraged to apply, subject to the provisions of 2.7 above.

This handbook, along with the Member Certification Standards and Model Syllabi, provides the primary source of reference regarding what ATOs are required to teach and how candidates should be prepared for the examinations. It is up to individual ATOs to determine how they intend to do that and who their intended audience will be. The way that educational technology is deployed to support this training, types of training aircraft (as long as they meet the rating's Membership Certification Standards training aircraft scope) and instructional style are parameters all at the discretion of the ATO.

### 5.1 ATO Application for Operation

Prospective new ATOs should start by thoroughly reviewing the ATO Policies and Procedures Handbook (this document), Member Certification Standards and supporting documents such as model syllabi.

The ATO will then need to compile:

- A website in accordance with the requirements set forth in 3.1 above, e.g. Moodle
  - Should the ATO need assistance in finding technical resources to start a website, learning management system, or any systems pertaining to an ATO, they can request information from the PTD. This does not include hosting solutions, support, or management of web resources, these resources will only be for getting started.
- Training programme(s) for at least one rating being offered including lesson plans and theory training material
- Their ATO Operations Manual

Once all elements of the application are ready, the Responsible Representative should complete form PTD 2000 (Application for the Initial Approval of Training Organisations) and distribute as directed on the form. Pilot rating training programs must be complete in all respects during submissions; partial applications cannot be reviewed.

**Please ensure all required elements on the checklist are enclosed with the application and/or ready for inspection as specified.**



## 5.2 ATO Application for Operation Review

Following receipt of the application form, the VATSIM PTD will acknowledge receipt of the application and review the experience, qualifications and suitability of the nominated post holders in accordance with section 3.2 of this handbook.

Once this process is complete, a PTD staff member will be assigned to complete the application process. The PTD staff member will inspect all aspects of the ATO including:

- The ATO Operations Manual
- The proposed training programme and lesson plans
- Theory training material content and systems
- Record keeping
- Quality assessment and improvement mechanisms
- Qualifications and experience of instructing staff

### 5.2.1 Web Service Review and Recommendation

The ATO will be required to provide the PTD with credentials permitting access to any and all web services (e.g. Discord, websites, etc) that are subject to review.

### 5.2.2 Pilot Rating Training Program Review

The proposed training programmes for each rating will be reviewed. In particular, the review will cover:

- The proposed training programme
  - Reference Section 3.3 of this handbook for more information
- Flying training course content and material
  - Are all elements and manoeuvres that are required to be trained included in the course?
  - Are there lesson plans with specific objectives, performance standards for completion and a planned sequence of instruction?
  - Is Human Factors/Threat and Error Management integrated?
  - Are correct techniques being trained?
- Theoretical training course content and material
  - Will it be engaging and captivating to your students or just a wall of text?
  - Are all required aspects of the syllabus covered?
  - Is the material accurate and up to date?
  - Is theoretical knowledge training appropriately integrated with flight training where practical?
- All MCS task knowledge elements are tested during the written examination
  - Reference Section 4.1 of this handbook for more info
- Any additional methods that might be required to assess and evaluate student performance on practical examinations

### 5.3 *Authorization to Operate*

If the outcome of the review is positive and results in an approval status, the ATO will be notified that they can begin providing VATSIM pilot training. If any issues have been identified that prevent full authorization, the ATO must remediate those shortcomings to the satisfaction of the staff member, who will make a final recommendation to the PTD.

#### 5.3.1 *ATO Pilot Rating Training Programs Offered*

ATOs may elect to provide training for one or more of the currently defined ratings; they are not required to provide training in all of them or in any specific combination.

#### 5.4 *Additional Pilot Rating Certification*

If an ATO already in operation wishes to gain certification to train for additional pilot rating(s), CFIs must contact their ATO POI. POIs are available as a resource during the construction phase to help answer questions or clarify any confusion. Once complete, the new pilot training program(s) shall be submitted to the ATO's POI for review.

#### 5.5 *Alternative Means of Compliance*

Where an ATO wishes to use an alternative training programme the case for this must be set out, showing clearly how the proposed process meets or exceeds the applicable MCS requirements.

#### 5.6 *Periodic Review Process*

The VATSIM PTD will perform regular audits of every active ATO. An approved PTD staff member will coordinate this audit. New ATOs will be audited within 12 months of commencing operation. ATOs receiving approval for new ratings will have their training provision for that rating audited within 12 months of the approval date for that rating.

The purpose of the audit process is to assist ATOs to develop and improve the quality of training provided and to ensure that the ATO is operating in accordance with the standards and policies set by the PTD. The VATSIM PTD will provide ATOs with a description of the audit process and sufficient time to permit full compliance with its requirements. It is the top intention of VATSIM PTD to create an audit process that is upfront, fair, and equal to all ATOs.

The audit evaluation form containing the results of the audit and areas for development will be submitted to the PTD and CFI at the completion of the audit.

The PTD may take action including suspension or revocation of authorization to operate if an ATO is found to be operating in an unsatisfactory manner.

In addition to the periodic review, the PTD reserves the right to undertake an audit of ATO activities at his/her discretion. The reasons for such a review will be disclosed to the ATO prior to the start of the audit process.

## **5.7 Revocation of ATO Authorization**

Authorization to operate as a VATSIM ATO is issued at the discretion of the VATSIM PTD and may be revoked under a variety of circumstances that include, but are not limited to:

- Violation of the policies and procedures set forth in this manual with special focus on the Terminal policies in 2.6 above;
- Violation of the terms and conditions set forth in the VATSIM Code of Conduct, Code of Regulations, or User Agreement, along with any other relevant VATSIM policies;
- Failure to fix deficiencies identified in any review (subsection 5.6),
- Failure to train in accordance with the approved training programme(s) or to a standard acceptable by the PTD; and
- ATO overall status remaining in “CLOSED” status for more than 90 consecutive days or more than 180 days in 12 months.

Revocation of authorization may require that an organization submit a new written application as set forth in this section or may be reversed following remediation of any outstanding deficiencies at the discretion of the PTD.