

ICAO LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY FOR FLIGHT CREW



Introduction

The UK Civil Aviation Authority has an international obligation to meet new requirements for Language Proficiency mandated by the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) and the Joint Aviation Authorities (JAA).

As background in March 2003, ICAO amended Annex 1 to add a requirement for all aeroplane and helicopter pilots, flight navigators, flight engineers and air traffic controllers to be assessed in their command of the language used for radio communication. A scale of 1 to 6 has been devised where native speakers would be assessed at Expert Level 6. For those where the language is not the mother tongue ICAO set a minimum of Operational Level 4 for licence issue. The new standard requires re-assessment at regular intervals but only gives recommendations on the periods that should be used. ICAO does not specify the language, but only "that used for radio communication".

The new requirements come into effect on 5 March 2008 at which time all those intending to operate or control international flights must have the licence endorsement. This includes private pilots operating outside controlled airspace, but excludes NPPL holders.

The Levels

Level 6 is classified as expert level, not retested, valid for life.

Levels 4 and 5 will require a re-test:

- Level 4 - at least every three years.
- Level 5 - at least every six years.

Notes: Levels 4 and 5 can later attain level 6 and therefore not require further testing. If a lower level (1 to 3) is attained the licence cannot be issued.

The Licence

Language Proficiency is an endorsement in all affected licences; the endorsement does not show the level of proficiency or any expiry date; Language Proficiency is to be added as a remark in Section XIII of the licence. Please note: Language Proficiency only applies where a Radio Licence is held.

Licences containing the language Proficiency Endorsement

Licence	FRTOL also Held
UK CPL(AS)	NO
UK CPL(B)	NO
UK PPL(G)	Yes
UK PPL(S)	Yes
UK PPL(M)	Yes
UK PPL(BA)	NO
UK FE	Yes
JAR ATPL(A)	Yes
JAR ATPL(H)	Yes
JAR CPL(A)	Yes
JAR CPL(H)	Yes
JAR PPL(A)	Yes
JAR PPL(H)	Yes
UK ATPL(A)	Yes
UK ATPL(HG)	Yes
UK CPL(A)	Yes
UK CPL(HG)	Yes
UK BCPL(A)	Yes
UK PPL(A)	Yes
UK PPL(H)	Yes
UK NPPL(A)	NO

Methods of Testing

At the RT Test

During the practical test for the UK FRTOL the Examiner assesses applicants in proficiency in operational radiotelephony in English. The CAA considers that this test meets the requirements for Formal Evaluation of English Language Proficiency. As FRTOL Examiners are not trained in formal Language Proficiency assessment, they may carry out evaluations but only for proficiency at level 6. Any person assessed by a FRTOL Examiner, as not proficient at this level might be referred to one of the English language schools providing a formal assessment service.

At a Flight Test

The CAA intends that Type Rating Examiners (TREs), Flight Examiners (FEs) and Class Rating Examiners (CREs), who have themselves been assessed as proficient at level 6, will undertake informal language proficiency assessments for existing licence holders, as part of the standard licence proficiency check. As TREs, FEs and CREs are not trained in formal language proficiency assessment, the assessments they carry out can only be for proficiency at level 6. Any person assessed by a TRE, FE or CRE as not proficient might be referred to one of the English language schools providing a formal assessment service.

Through a Language School

The UK CAA does not have the facility to approve language training schools. Under European Joint Aviation Requirements for Flight Crew Licensing (JAR-FCL), such schools merely need to be “acceptable” to us, and we will be publishing details of language schools wishing to offer training and testing services that are accredited by the British Council or other similar bodies to meet this need.

At a Training Organisation

Many CAA approved flight training organisations and type rating training organisations offer language training modules as part of an individuals overall training package. Language proficiency may also be assessed by this means and is acceptable to the CAA.

Other Acceptable Means

Language proficiency may also be assessed by other means acceptable to the CAA. 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 acceptable to the CAA before being put into effect. Some suggested means of informal assessment are:

- Informal assessment as part of an employment selection procedure.
- Informal assessment by CRMI during operator’s training.
- Informal assessment during line flights.
- Informal assessment at FI seminars and CAA safety presentations.

Licensing Procedures for current Licence Holders for the Language Proficiency Endorsement

The JAA has transposed the ICAO requirements for pilots into JAR-FCL, which contains the following provision to allow “grandfather rights” at Level 4 for all licence holders with a radiotelephony operator’s certificate. We propose to re-issue all those licences where the holders possess a FRTOL by 5 March 2008.

Clearly the majority of holders of UK issued pilot licences will be proficient at level 6. For reasons of administrative efficiency, and for the convenience of licence holders, subsequent assessment at language proficiency level 6 will remove the requirement to be re-assessed periodically. The CAA intends to utilise the subsequent flight test, such as a Licence Proficiency Check (LPC) as the means for licence holders to be assessed at language proficiency level 6, within the period of validity (3 Years) of their initial language proficiency level 4 endorsement – 5 March 2008. At the next licence transaction, such as a renewal or the addition of a type rating the licence holder should submit evidence e.g. a copy of the LPC form, of the level 6 evaluation to enable us to update our records. As the level of proficiency is not endorsed on the licence, there will be no need for licence re-issue at this stage.

Licensing Procedures for New Licence Holders for the Language Proficiency Endorsement

All new licence applicants with at least level 4 Language Proficiency assessment will have the endorsement added to their licence.

What happens if you are not level 6

Any individual who is not assessed to Level 6 can remain at Level 4 or 5 and be retested every 3 or 6 years or they can attend a Language School for training/testing to achieve level 6 and avoid the need for any further assessment.

Note: If a lower level (1 to 3) is attained the licence cannot be issued.

More information can be found at:

www.jaa.nl/

www.icao.int/