

THE GUILD OF AIR PILOTS AND AIR NAVIGATORS

POSITION PAPER ON FLYING INSTRUCTOR AVAILABILITY & STANDARDS

1. Flying Instructor Availability

1.1 Despite the current economic downturn, there is still a widespread perception that the Aviation Industry will continue to grow in the longer term. Globally the requirement for producing new pilots remains reasonably buoyant, and in the longer term bullish. Therefore, there will still be a demand for flying instructors although the Multi-Pilot Licence (MPL) may have an impact. The route to a commercial licence for many is still modular with time spent building hours as a Flying Instructor (“FI”), whilst there are many others who instruct to supplement their primary job, teach in semi retirement or find that flying instruction has become vocational for them. At present, there is some evidence of a rise in the numbers of those undertaking FI training as a means of maintaining flying currency whilst airline jobs are scarce. However, the majority of all these instructors will only have a transitory impact on the overall need to train and retain FIs for the longer term. Ultimately, lack of credit and reduced cash flow will hit the smaller Flight Training Organisations (FTOs) hard.

1.2 The Armed Services have traditionally provided a steady stream of Qualified Flying Instructors (QFIs) who teach in the civil world on retirement from the services, although most seek employment in the airline industry as pilots and instruct only part time or later on in life. However, the Services do not now train high numbers of QFIs each year (around 40 in 2008 against 90 in 1998) and are struggling to fill all of their instructional posts, relying on the use of full time reservists in some areas. The need, under the future Military Flying Training System (MFTS), to source a number of instructors from the private sector to be used in military flying training is a major consideration, since they may not exist in sufficient quantity and quality.

2. Flying Instructor Standards

Civil aviation has many worthy FTOs providing good FI courses and striving to achieve high standards. Major FTOs benefit from structured FI training, development and standardisation. Smaller outfits struggle to match this because of obvious commercial pressures. Civil FTOs do not have the same structure and resources as the RAF Central Flying School (CFS). However some have, in the past, benefited indirectly from employing ex CFS FIs. This may not continue. High standards require supervision and testing and it has already been seen that it is not possible to set up a civil monitoring organisation - even a voluntary one - because of the administrative costs involved. Maintenance of standards of instruction must be firmly the remit of the regulatory examiners and supported by the providers who must balance the drive for excellence against commercial pressures. Producing sufficient FIs is one thing; providing sufficient good instructors is another. The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) sets and examines the standards of FIs and changes to those standards are initiated by them. That said, the input for that change can originate from industry or an outside source like the Guild.

3. Career Flying Instructors

There are some (though not enough) career instructors outside the large commercially orientated FTOs, who form the backbone of the GA flying clubs and organisations. The

challenge is to develop the attraction of the professional instructor as a through life career, with potential for personal development and achievement which has to be harmonised with credible and competitive financial returns. There are people who would be entirely happy to instruct all their lives, but surely the industry wants and benefits from a good mix of experience. Opportunity for ex airline pilots to become FIs would be invaluable. Career FI suggests job satisfaction, targets improved standards, an enhancement of status but above all else, and predominantly, it must mean more money in the pocket. It all sounds good but administrative and organisation costs come into play again and many smaller schools cannot provide these.

4. Technical Knowledge

Under current European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) proposals for flight crew licensing, the introduction of the Leisure Pilot's Licence (LPL), and the relaxation of theoretical knowledge requirements for the PPL instructor, represent the start of a similar progressive ladder to that in the gliding fraternity. This also opens the opportunity of a career as an instructor, without the excessive requirement to study for the Commercial Pilot's Licence (CPL). Despite the progressive opportunity presented by Basic and full LPL, in practice, the essential knowledge and early skills remain the same as for the Private Pilot's Licence (PPL). If we are to prevent a further slide from current standards, the instructors' training must be every bit as strong as it is now. This is an area where current EASA proposals threaten this fragile structure; firstly, the release from the requirement to hold CPL knowledge. This is considered a positive step but it is widely accepted that a teacher's knowledge must be of greater depth than that required of his students. Simply to require PPL knowledge at instructor level will lead to a destructive spiral.

5. Obtaining Qualifications

5.1 In terms of leisure flying the available challenges should be more progressive and we must encourage enthusiasts to take the instructor's role. By example, the UK gliding fraternity have successfully married this ideal with a progression through their pilots' certificates. The result is an integrated ladder of achievement running from first solo to instructor and beyond which refreshes the challenge at regular intervals and has successfully engaged gliding enthusiasts over the longer term. The course for the Light Aircraft Flight Instructor (LAFI), which some consider to be irrelevant believing the lowest category to instruct should be a FI, is proposed to be half the length of the full FI course at just 15 hours of airborne instructor tuition. Pressure of cost will naturally persuade the amateur instructor into this shorter course. Already the full FI course is perilously short and this is a major contributor to the poor training standards widely perceived by the industry. Most of the existing FI course flying is spent in learning and practising basic airborne instructional techniques, and in presenting exactly the exercises contained in the proposed Basic LPL. The current proposal to shorten the training course for LAFI to just 15 hours flying in a modern 2-seat Single Engine Piston (SEP) aeroplane will leave the resulting LPL students excessively vulnerable.

5.2 QFIs in the Services benefit from some accreditation towards a FI rating depending on the level of their proficiency (the QFI category they hold) and at what stage of training they instructed. The CAA and CFS have reviewed this accreditation in 2008 with the intention of improving the requirements and expanding the accreditation to allow Multi Engine ("ME") instructors to apply for the allied civilian qualification. This will boost the potential availability of ME/IRIs (Instrument Rating Instructors), predominately to commercial FTOs.

5.3 Thought has been given to the idea of a stand-alone professional FI licence as opposed to the FI allied to the CPL/ATPL (or legacy Basic Commercial Pilot's Licence (BCPL) which will lapse under EASA ruling). There is now however little appetite for this because the EASA consultation process has addressed the idea to some extent by removing the requirement to hold a CPL to instruct. It should be remembered that a Licence permits a pilot to fly an aircraft according to type of issued licence. A Rating allows the pilot to operate that aircraft in a particular fashion. Therefore, a FI Rating permits the holder to operate the aircraft for the purposes of flying training. If a separate FI Licence were introduced, every type of operation involving instruction would also require an extra Licence, e.g. IRI, Type Rating Examiner, Simulator Examiner and others, with large cost and regulatory issues.

6 Guild Position

The Guild can play a pivotal and important role in the future support of the provision of a quality, professional and dedicated cadre of flying instructors both at mainstream FTO and flying club/group level. It should consider:

6.1 Continuing to promote the career flying instructor through bursaries and sponsorship and in a wider context, promote and encourage the tenet of the 'professional career instructor'.

6.2 Engaging with FTOs at all levels to research further the underlying issues of instructor availability, development and funding and to look to harmonise the FTOs to prevent a two tier instructor cadre developing.

6.3 The development and production of a Guild sponsored 'Flying Instructors Course Syllabus of Training', in agreement with the CAA and other bodies, to promote standardisation.

6.4 Promoting the recommendation for FIs to attain and develop theoretical knowledge to complement the level that they teach in more practical terms.

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