



REGULATION REFORM

Flight crew licensing (Part 61)—the basics



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Learn more about flight crew licensing rules
– in effect since September 2014.

The full rules are contained in Part 61 of the
Civil Aviation Safety Regulations.

Who should read this information sheet?

- › Pilots.
- › Flight engineers.
- › Anyone who is considering applying for a pilot licence.
- › Flight instructors and examiners.
- › Operators.

The rules for flight crew

The flight crew licensing rules are contained in Part 61 of the Civil Aviation Safety Regulations (CASR) 1998. These rules cover what flight crew need to do to obtain and maintain licences, ratings and endorsements and the limitations that apply to exercising their privileges.

New rules came into effect on 1 September 2014. The new rules consolidate the flight crew licensing requirements that were previously in the Civil Aviation Regulations 1988 and the Civil Aviation Orders into one 'Part' of the CASR.

The authorisations for pilots and flight engineers have now been organised into a simplified, three-tier structure of licences, ratings and endorsements. All authorisations are valid permanently unless they are cancelled or suspended.

Under the new rules, competency standards now apply to all licences, ratings and endorsements, as well as flight tests, proficiency checks and flight reviews.

The *flight crew licensing* regulations can be accessed via the Australian Government's ComLaw website.





How the flight crew licensing system works

Flight crew licences, ratings and endorsements – Part 61 authorisations

Part 61 includes all of the authorisations pilots and flight engineers need to have in order to conduct particular kinds of flight operations, depending on the aircraft being flown.

Flight crew licences, ratings and endorsements are prescribed wherever a flying operation is associated with safety hazards that warrant mandatory pilot training and testing.

The aim is to maintain safety and ensure that people conducting these kinds of operations are competent to do so.

For example, pilots can conduct aerial mustering operations in a single-engine helicopter only if the pilot holds at least:

- a private pilot licence with a helicopter category rating (this covers the minimum licence requirement and the rating allowing the pilot to fly a helicopter)
- a single-engine helicopter class rating (this covers the type of aircraft being operated)
- a low-level rating and an aerial mustering helicopter endorsement (this relates to the operational activity being conducted).

Licences, ratings and endorsements don't have expiry dates.

Obtaining Part 61 authorisations

To obtain a Part 61 authorisation, you need to:

- learn the **aeronautical knowledge** and pass the theory **examinations** (if they are required)
- complete a **course of flight training** that is:
 - given by a **flight or simulator instructor** who holds the required **training endorsements** and
 - managed by a **flying school** (where required) according to a **training plan**
- meet prerequisites such as English language proficiency and aeronautical experience
- hold the relevant licences, ratings and endorsements for the authorisation you are seeking
- pass a **flight test** that is conducted by a **flight examiner** who holds the required **flight test endorsement**
- **apply** for the licence, rating or endorsement.

For design feature and flight activity endorsements, you need to acquire the knowledge and complete practical training that is given by a flight instructor who holds the required training endorsement.

Licences are granted by CASA. Flight examiners can grant ratings and endorsements. Flight instructors can grant design feature and flight activity endorsements. Ratings and endorsements are granted when the examiner or instructor enters them on the pilot's licence, and can be used immediately.





Continuing to exercise the privileges of a Part 61 authorisation

After gaining an authorisation, pilots need to maintain their competency. This involves the general competency rule, flight reviews, proficiency checks and recent experience rules, which are covered in the next section.

What it means to be 'competent'

Overarching all of these requirements is the **general competency rule**. This rule requires pilots to consider their fitness to conduct an operation immediately before they undertake it.

Things to consider are the pilot's familiarity with the operation of the aircraft and the kind of operations being conducted, as well as their own knowledge and practical skills. Where appropriate, pilots should seek advice and consider refresher training or practice before commencing an operation they haven't carried out for a while. Pilots also need to consider their fitness to fly from a physical and mental health perspective.

Being competent means having sufficient aeronautical knowledge, practical skills and appropriate behaviours to be able to conduct a particular kind of operation safely and reliably, according to agreed standards. These standards are prescribed in the Part 61 Manual of Standards (Part 61 MOS).

Knowledge, skills and behaviours are developed through training, and evaluated through the training and testing processes. Periodic checking ensures competency is maintained or, where necessary, restored.

Find out more by reading CASA's information sheet about *general competency for pilots*.



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Part 61 requires training

Training can be for the initial grant of an authorisation or for general competency purposes, as well as to refresh or update a person's competency in an activity.

Training involves instructors, training courses and training providers.

The Part 61 MOS contains the aeronautical knowledge and practical flight standards for all Part 61 licences, ratings and endorsements. These standards are used by training organisations and instructors to develop and conduct training courses; by instructors and examiners to conduct competency assessments, flight tests, proficiency checks and flight reviews; and by CASA for approving and monitoring training courses.

The training course for any authorisation needs to cover the units and elements of competency prescribed in the Part 61 MOS for the authorisation, and be delivered according to a training plan.

Where appropriate the trainee's prior learning, experience and qualifications are taken into account when finalising the training plan to ensure it best suits their needs.

Checking competency is a routine part of training and is performed during training exercises by the instructor to ensure the pilot's training is progressing adequately. The amount of testing during a course depends on the complexity and duration of the course. In some cases, progress checks are carried out by independent check pilots.

Managing training

Training is managed by holders of Part 141 and Part 142 certificates and holders of approvals granted under regulations 141.035 and 142.040. In the case of design feature and flight activity endorsements, instructors can conduct the training independently.

Training is a managed process and appropriate records are kept to monitor a person's progress. Under Part 61, a person should only be required to do the training that is necessary for them to obtain their chosen authorisation, taking into account any relevant prior learning, experience and qualifications.

Part 61 training is split between Part 141 training activities and Part 142 training activities, as defined in those regulations.





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Part 142 includes training for:

- › multi-crew operation authorisations
- › type ratings
- › integrated training courses.

Part 142 training typically includes ground and practical components that are integrated into a full-time course, with the training being closely managed using a training management system.

Part 141 training is generally for:

- › single-pilot operations authorisations
- › non-integrated training courses
- › type rating training for regulation 142.045 prescribed aircraft.¹

Part 141 training typically only includes practical components, with the ground training being covered in other ways, such as self-study. The training can be ad hoc (that is, not scheduled), although there will be many instances of full-time or scheduled training being conducted under Part 141. This is likely to be the case if the course duration is short, such as a type rating course for a regulation 142.045 type rated aircraft¹.

Part 61 instructors

Training for the initial grant of an authorisation must be given by someone who holds a Part 61 flight or simulator instructor rating, as well as the relevant training endorsements for the authorisation.

The same requirements apply to training given as part of a flight review.

Basic principles need to be applied when instruction is being given, and instructors need to apply those principles in the operational context of the training. Instructors are expected to be competent in conducting the operation themselves, as well as being able to simultaneously deliver the training and manage difficult circumstances as they arise.

Instructors need to be trained and assessed as competent to conduct a particular activity. They are periodically checked to ensure they continue to be so, through refresher training (where applicable) and proficiency checks. Part 141 and 142 operators have responsibilities for ensuring instructors are competent conducting any training they are assigned to conduct.

¹ Regulation 142.045 allows CASA to prescribe the aircraft type ratings for which training can be conducted by a Part 141 operator.



Not all instructors need to be able to design training courses, however they must be able to evaluate the performance of their trainees and determine what new or revision training is required. They must also be able to decide when their trainee has reached the required standard for an authorisation.

All training must be organised and managed, however not all instructors need to be supervised. Supervision is the responsibility of the training operator.

Training for endorsements that are not part of an operational rating can be conducted by an independent instructor. They include design feature endorsements and flight activity endorsements.

The independent instructor must have a training plan that covers the competencies for the particular endorsement, and maintain records of the training delivered.

Flight tests

At the conclusion of training, the trainee needs to complete a flight test. Flight tests are conducted by **flight examiners** to ensure the trainee has achieved at least the minimum standard for the licence, rating or endorsement that they have been trained for.

Flight testing and flight examiners are subject to oversight by CASA to ensure standards are being maintained.

Part 61 flight examiners

Flight examiners need to be competent in the following:

- › conducting the operations they perform tests and checks for
- › applying the basic principles of flight testing and proficiency checks
- › granting ratings and endorsements, and other administration.

As the pilot in command of a flight test in an aircraft, the examiner needs to be able to simultaneously assess the candidate's competency and deal with any complicating situations that might arise during the test.





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Flight examiners provide a quality check of training and ensure applicants are ready to be granted the authorisation they are being tested for. They provide feedback to the candidate and their training provider if deficiencies are identified. This feedback should be used by the training school and instructor to improve the quality of the training that was conducted.

For critical authorisations such as professional flight crew licences, examiners should be independent of the training process. Examiners are overseen by CASA or an operator where training and checking activities are being conducted.

To become a flight examiner, you need to complete a course of training conducted by CASA or an approved organisation. Every two years, you need to complete professional development training and an examiner rating proficiency check.

Flight reviews and proficiency checks

After gaining a Part 61 authorisation, it is normal for knowledge and skills to deteriorate. Flight reviews and proficiency checks ensure a pilot's knowledge and skills remain at – or are brought back up to – standard. This is commonly known as recurrent training and proficiency checking.

At one end of the spectrum training and checking is managed at the individual pilot level with oversight provided by instructors, chief pilots and operators.

For example, training and checking activities for single pilot visual flight rules (VFR) operations in light aircraft are infrequent (usually every two years) and cover the fundamental aspects of flying that are relevant to the pilot. Limited planning is required and the activity is arranged with the instructor conducting the flight review.

At the other end of the spectrum training and checking is managed at the organisation level using a systems approach that is oversighted by the operator and CASA surveillance. For example, structured training and checking activities for a complex instrument flight rules (IFR) multi-crew aircraft operation are planned and delivered under a managed system that is subject to surveillance and reporting.

To find out more, read CASA's information sheets about *flight reviews and proficiency checks*.



Flight reviews

A flight review is a check of a pilot's competency to conduct flight safely, and is mainly applied to private flying where operators are not involved (operators have responsibilities for ensuring their pilots are competent to conduct the operations they're employed for).

A flight review is also an opportunity for the pilot to receive training that refreshes flying skills and operational knowledge. Pilots undertake flight reviews to ensure they continue to be competent flying particular types of aircraft or exercising the privileges of certain operational ratings such as a private IFR rating, night VFR rating and low-level rating.

Flight reviews should incorporate training. However, there are circumstances where training is not needed. For example, pilots who are involved in several kinds of operations, operating regularly and keeping current with operating procedures and rules might only need to have their competency reviewed.

In other cases, a flight review for a rating is not required if the pilot completes a relevant proficiency check which covers the operation the flight review is for. For example, a pilot completing an aerial application rating proficiency check in a single-engine helicopter is taken to have completed a single-engine helicopter flight review. Consequently, the pilot doesn't need to complete a separate aircraft rating flight review.

Flight review requirements can be combined into a single flight, if feasible. For example, an aircraft rating flight review could be combined with a low-level rating or night VFR rating flight review, as long as the units and elements of competency in the MOS for both ratings are all covered.

The standards for flight reviews are contained in Schedule 7 of the Part 61 MOS.





Proficiency checks

A proficiency check is an assessment of a pilot's skills and knowledge in a particular operational area, and is also designed to ensure the pilot remains competent conducting those kinds of operations. Proficiency checks only apply to the following ratings:

- › instrument rating
- › night vision imaging system (NVIS) rating
- › aerial application rating
- › instructor rating
- › flight examiner rating.

A proficiency check satisfies the flight review requirement for the class or type of aircraft the check is conducted in.

Proficiency checks used to be called rating renewals. Under the old regulations ratings expired, so pilots had to renew their ratings by passing a renewal flight test. Under Part 61 ratings don't expire, so pilots need to do a proficiency check. The requirements are almost the same. Pilots are not allowed to exercise the privileges of a rating unless they satisfy the proficiency check rules for that rating, within the prescribed timeframe.

Proficiency checking doesn't involve remedial training. If a pilot needs practice or retraining, they are encouraged to do that before taking the check, and with an instructor if necessary.

As an alternative to completing a rating proficiency check, pilots can complete one of the following activities that covers the particular kind of operation.

- › Undergo an operator proficiency check (OPC).
- › Successfully participate in an approved training and checking system.
- › Undergo a flight test for the grant of another endorsement on the rating.

The standards for rating proficiency checks are contained in Schedule 6 of the Part 61 MOS.

Conducting proficiency checks

Rating proficiency checks are conducted by flight examiners and, in some cases, pilots are granted a regulation 61.040 approval to conduct them.

Rating proficiency checks don't need to involve operators. That means the flight examiner manages the check with the pilot. In many cases, operators make arrangements for their pilots to complete proficiency checks. Operators do this as part of their routine operational responsibilities.

If the pilot meets the standards for the check, the examiner enters the details on the pilot's licence and notifies CASA of the result. CASA then updates the pilot's licensing records with the new details.

A proficiency check is effective once it is entered on the pilot's licence.

Training and checking systems

Regulation 217 of the Civil Aviation Regulations 1988 (CAR 1988) requires some operators to have an approved training and checking organisation (CAR 217 organisation). At the very least, the operator has to specify how they conduct the recurrent training and proficiency checking activities that are appropriate for their operations. In some cases, operators conduct Part 61 rating proficiency checks and flight reviews. In other cases, the checking activities are referred to as operator proficiency checks (OPCs).

The content of an OPC is detailed in the operator's Training and Checking Manual. It is common for OPCs to be conducted in the same way as rating proficiency checks. However, there is scope for an operator to propose an alternative means of achieving an equivalent standard through a checking regime.

Some operators have advanced training and checking systems which are treated differently under Part 61 – see over the page for more information.

Operator proficiency checks

OPCs are conducted for the operator by flight examiners, and in some cases pilots holding check pilot approvals² in accordance with an Operations Manual. OPCs are a component of training and checking systems. For some kinds of operations, the system has to be approved by CASA (see below for particular examples of approved training and checking systems).

Operators can make arrangements for their training and checking activities to be carried out by a contracted Part 142 certificate holder. However, there are limitations on how this can be achieved.

² Operator proficiency checks can be conducted by holders of regulation 61.040 approvals and CAO check pilot approvals according to the terms of their instrument of approval. Refer to exemption CASA EX140/14.

An OPC normally covers the same content as a rating proficiency check, but an operator can propose variations to the checks where the variations are relevant to the particular requirements of an operation. In many cases pilots are subject to more than one OPC per year, so an operator can arrange the checks to cover all of the elements in a normal rating check along with other relevant aspects of the operation.

Pilots completing OPCs are not restricted to exercising the privileges of their rating with the operator that conducted the OPC. If they want to fly privately, or with another operator, the pilot needs to satisfy the training and checking requirements in the operations manual of the other operator.

In some cases, such as in the aerial application sector, the head of flight operations can conduct proficiency checks for the pilots working for that operator. This option is managed under the regulations in Part 137.

The requirements for OPCs will be further developed and managed by future operational regulations such as Parts 121, 133, 135, and 138.



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Advanced training and checking systems

Part 61 has special provisions for advanced training and checking systems. A systems approach is used to satisfy flight review, proficiency check and recent experience standards. The recurrent training and checking of pilots is managed by the system, and is an acceptable means of complying with the relevant rules in Part 61.

Advanced training and checking systems are designed to suit the kinds of activities the operator conducts. Pilot performance monitoring – along with scenario-based recurrent training and checking activities – forms part of this more sophisticated approach to the basic proficiency checking requirements in Part 61.

Operators can take advantage of this approach to training and checking, where appropriate, if they are approved to do so by CASA. In these instances, CASA grants the operator an approval under regulation 61.040 for particular Part 61 provisions.

For example, an operator's system could be approved for the purposes of type rating flight review requirements, night and instrument rating recent experience, and proficiency checks.

An operator's advanced recurrent training and checking system (where 61.040 approvals apply) is designed to ensure the operator's pilots are competent conducting its operations in specific aircraft. That system is not designed to ensure the pilots are competent conducting other operations. Consequently, pilots who want to conduct flights with another operator need to satisfy the other operator's training and checking system. Also, for private operations, pilots are required to complete a flight review or proficiency check for the ratings they want to use.

Keeping records

In order to effectively manage the licensing system, CASA needs to know about new pilots entering the system and when they gain new authorisations and complete flight reviews and proficiency checks.



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CASA also needs to know about recurrent training and checking, or have access to records of that training and checking which are kept by the operator. CASA relies upon operators to maintain those records.

Provisions for people who were authorised under the old rules for flight crew

A transition scheme allows pilots, instructors and examiners to continue conducting activities they were authorised to do before the new rules commenced on 1 September 2014. More details about the transition period can be found in CASA's information sheet about the *flight crew licensing transition provisions*.

For new entrants into the aviation community – or for people applying for new licences, ratings or endorsements – the new flight crew licensing rules apply immediately.

What are instruments and exemptions?

Legislative instruments are made by CASA to support the flight crew licensing suite of regulations. The instruments have their head of power in the regulations.

Exemptions are issued when changes are needed to address unintended consequences of the regulations or where the regulations don't adequately manage a particular unique circumstance.

After being made, they are either registered on the Federal Register of Legislative Instruments (FRLI) on the ComLaw website or, in the case of regulation 61.040 approvals, published on CASA's website.

More information about flight crew licensing related approvals, instruments and exemptions can be found on the CASA website.

Find out more

Visit www.casa.gov.au/licensingregs

The flight crew licensing rules are contained in Parts 61, 141 and 142 of the Civil Aviation Safety Regulations.

The transition rules are contained in Part 202 of the Civil Aviation Safety Regulations.

