



REGULATION REFORM

English language proficiency requirements – changes from October 2015



© Rich Legg

Learn about the rules relating to English language proficiency requirements, including changes in effect since October 2015.

Who should read this information sheet?

- › Pilots.
- › Instructors.
- › Flight training operators.
- › Flight examiners.
- › English language proficiency assessors.
- › Anyone who is considering applying for a pilot licence.
- › Anyone who is considering applying for an Aircraft Radio Operator Certificate.
- › Anyone who is considering conducting training and testing for an Aircraft Radio Operator Certificate.

What is aviation English Language Proficiency (ELP)?

Aviation ELP is a measure of someone's ability to communicate in English using an aviation-relevant assessment process.

People who use aeronautical radios need to be able to communicate effectively in voice only (for radio), as well as in face-to-face situations like pre-flight briefings, training and interacting with other crew members. From a safety perspective, this communication needs to be in the language that is used locally by pilots and air traffic service providers.

In Australia and many other countries, the language is English.

Standards for language proficiency were established by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) in 2008, and applied to flight crew licensing in Australia the same year.

If you hold an aviation ELP, you do not need to hold a general ELP.



What is general ELP? Is it the same as aviation ELP?

General ELP and aviation ELP are different.

A general ELP assessment doesn't cover any aviation technical terminology and it doesn't meet the ICAO Annex 1 standard for ELP. Unlike the aviation ELP, there is only one level for the general ELP.

You can meet the general ELP requirement in one of two ways. You can either undertake a formal general ELP assessment, or attend an interview and provide suitable evidence of your English language proficiency.

Suitable evidence includes school records, employment history, approved training courses or generally available language tests such as the International English Language Testing System (IELTS), the Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC) or the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL).

Have the rules for English language proficiency changed?

Yes, in October 2015 CASA issued an exemption (CASA EX146/15) that introduced a number of changes to the rules for English language proficiency requirements. These changes are now in effect.

The changes are expected to be incorporated into the flight crew licensing regulations (Parts 61, 64, 141 and 142) in the future.

What are the main changes?

- › CASA can now approve people to conduct level 6 aviation ELP assessments and general ELP assessments, provided they complete the required training and evaluation provided by CASA – this will expand the number of assessors available.
- › You can now go directly to an assessor who is approved for levels 4, 5 and 6 (regulation 61.270 assessor) for an aviation English language assessment, rather than having to be assessed by an examiner first. This will help make the process faster and less complex.
- › You can apply for a recreational pilot licence flight test and a recreational pilot licence if you hold a current aviation ELP.
- › You can fly solo if you hold a current general ELP or an aviation ELP.
- › You can apply for, and use, an Aircraft Radio Operator Certificate if you meet the general ELP standard.





What is an aviation ELP assessment?

An aviation ELP assessment involves a candidate being tested on their ability to communicate in English in the aviation environment, where safety is paramount. The assessment involves two-way communications between the assessor and the candidate, and covers:

- › pronunciation
- › grammatical structures and sentence patterns
- › vocabulary
- › fluency
- › comprehension
- › interactions while communicating.

Once you have been tested, your assessor will submit a report to CASA and your flight crew licensing records will be updated. Your ELP assessment record will be printed in the Conditions/ Licence Remarks section of your flight crew licence document.

Do I need to have a current aviation ELP?

You will need to hold a current aviation ELP if you are:

- › applying for a flight test for a private pilot licence, commercial pilot licence, multi-crew pilot licence or air transport pilot licence
- › applying for a private pilot licence, commercial pilot licence, multi-crew pilot licence or air transport pilot licence
- › applying for an Australian licence based on an overseas equivalent licence (this is not required if the overseas licence is endorsed with a current ICAO English language proficiency assessment)
- › applying for an Australian licence based on an Australian Defence Force qualification
- › applying for a recreational pilot licence flight radio endorsement
- › exercising the privileges of a flight crew licence other than a recreational pilot licence (this doesn't apply where your licence was granted on or before 4 March 2008 and is being used within Australia).



© Prki | iStockPhoto



I already hold a licence. Do I need to undertake an aviation ELP assessment?

If you already hold a licence you will only need to undertake an aviation ELP assessment if you want to exercise the privileges of your licence overseas.

However, you will need to hold a current aviation ELP before you can apply for any flight test for a private pilot licence, commercial pilot licence, multi-crew pilot licence or air transport pilot licence.

What standard do I need to meet to pass an aviation ELP assessment?

The assessment standards are in the Part 61 Manual of Standards. There are six assessment levels for aviation ELP with level 6 (expert) being the highest.

If you are assessed at **level 1, 2 or 3**, you cannot get a licence or use a radio.

Level 4 and 5 assessments are acceptable for obtaining a licence and using radios, and expire after three and six years respectively.

A **level 6** assessment doesn't expire.



Who can conduct an aviation ELP assessment?

With minimal training, a person with a level 6 assessment can relatively easily assess another person as being expert or not. However, assessing a person as being at level 5 or below is much more difficult and requires expertise in linguistics.

A small number of specialists are approved to assess people at all levels. These assessors are approved under regulation 61.270 of the Civil Aviation Safety Regulations and are referred to as '61.270 assessors' in this information sheet.

The following people are authorised to conduct aviation ELP assessments:

- › flight examiners who hold an English language assessment endorsement (this includes people who hold an Approved Testing Office delegation and a CAO 40.0 approval to conduct aviation ELP assessments)
- › CASA delegates
- › 61.270 assessors
- › people approved by CASA under the exemption – this could include suitably qualified people such as teachers, especially where examiners are unavailable.

How do I get an aviation ELP assessment?

To get an aviation ELP assessment you can apply directly to a person who is authorised to conduct the assessment.

To find an assessor, talk to your local flight training school – they are familiar with who the assessors are in their local area.

What happens if I don't pass my level 6 aviation ELP assessment?

If you don't achieve the level 6 standard, you can apply to a 61.270 assessor for an assessment. These assessors can test people at all levels including levels 4, 5 and 6.

If you meet the level 4 or 5 standard you will be assessed as having a current aviation ELP. However, a level 5 assessment is only valid for six years and a level 4 assessment is only valid for three years. Once these time periods have elapsed, you will need to do another assessment.

I am applying for a flight crew licence flight test or flight crew licence. What English language requirements do I need to meet?

You need to have a current level 4, 5 or 6 aviation ELP to apply for all licences and flight tests, except for recreational pilot licences and recreational pilot licence flight tests.

Do I need a general ELP?

You will need a general ELP if you don't have a current aviation ELP and you are:

- › applying for a flight test for a recreational pilot licence
- › applying for a recreational pilot licence
- › a student pilot who wants to fly solo
- › a student pilot who wants to operate a radio
- › applying for an Aircraft Radio Operator Certificate (note this is different to the old rules where an aviation ELP was required).

How do I get a general ELP?

There are two ways you can meet the general ELP requirement.

The first option is to demonstrate your English language proficiency to a general ELP assessor.

This is similar to the aviation ELP assessment, but doesn't include technical aviation terminology. You can undertake this assessment with a flight examiner who holds an English language assessment endorsement, a CASA delegate, an aviation ELP assessor or another person approved by CASA.

The second option is to attend an interview with an authorised person. In these circumstances, an authorised person is:

- › a CASA delegate
- › a flight examiner with an ELP endorsement
- › an approved testing officer with ELP approval
- › a person approved to conduct ELP assessments
- › the head of operations of a Part 141 or Part 142 flight training organisation
- › a grade 1 instructor authorised by the head of operations.

During this interview you will need to demonstrate that you have sufficient general English language proficiency for the authorisation you are applying for, and to ensure flight safety.

You will also need to provide evidence that you have:

- › met the criteria for schooling or employment in an English-speaking environment as outlined in the Part 61 Manual of Standards
- › passed one of the general English tests listed in the Part 61 Manual of Standards – such as IELTS, TOEIC or TOEFL
- › completed a CASA-approved course of training in English language proficiency.

I am a student pilot doing my cross-country training. What ELP requirements do I need to meet?

Student pilots doing cross-country training need to meet the general ELP requirement or have a current aviation ELP.

I am applying for a recreational pilot licence flight radio endorsement. What English language requirements do I need to meet?

You need to hold a current aviation ELP.

I have a recreational pilot licence and am doing my cross-country training. What English language requirements do I need to meet?

If you are receiving training and you are authorised by an instructor then you may use the aircraft radio, and CASA strongly recommends you do, as long as you meet the general ELP requirement.

To get the recreational pilot licence radio endorsement, you need to have a current aviation ELP.

Where will evidence of my English language proficiency be recorded?

Aviation ELP proficiency is recorded on your flight crew licence document, under the conditions/licence remarks section.

General ELP proficiency is recorded on a form and kept with your training records until it is time to apply for a flight test, when it is presented to the flight examiner. The record is then submitted to CASA with your application form for the licence.

If you are applying for an Aircraft Radio Operator Certificate, you will need to submit your ELP form together with your Aircraft Radio Operator Certificate application form.





©BanksPhotos

I don't have a flight crew licence yet. Who keeps the record of my ELP proficiency?

Your flying school will keep your ELP proficiency record in your training records. When it is time to apply for a recreational pilot licence flight test, the ELP record is presented to your flight examiner. The record is then submitted to CASA, together with your recreational pilot licence application form.

I did an ELP assessment overseas. Will CASA recognise this assessment?

CASA recognises assessments that are compliant with the ICAO Annex 1 system, and where the pilot's licence is endorsed with a current aviation ELP. That means the licence shows English language proficiency, the level of assessment and the expiry date, if there is one.

There is no overseas equivalent to the general ELP.

I did an English language proficiency assessment before October 2015. Is it still valid?

Yes. The exemption issued by CASA in October 2015 relaxes some of the requirements and broadens the range of people who can conduct assessments. If you did an English language proficiency assessment before October 2015 it remains valid and you do not need to undertake another one.

Want to know more?

View CASA exemption EX146/15 to read the changes to the rules relating to English language proficiency assessments.



English language proficiency requirements: at a glance

