



**OUTLINE OF
RCAA GENERIC CERTIFICATION PROCESS**

Purpose— This Advisory Circular (AC) provides guidance to organizations and individuals regarding the certification process generally applied by the RCAA in the determination for issuance of an authorization, approval or acceptance.

The RCAA publishes separately advisory circulars for more complex certifications or subject matter.

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- This AC describes an acceptable means, but not the only means, to comply with Part 3 and Part 4 regarding installation of electronic flight bags.
- This AC is not mandatory and does not constitute a regulation. However, if you use the means described in this AC, you must follow it entirely.
- The term “must” is used to indicate mandatory requirements when following the guidance in this AC. The terms “should” and “recommend” are used when following the guidance is recommended but not required to comply with this AC..

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SECTION 1 POLICY & GENERAL INFORMATION

1.1 STATUS OF THIS ADVISORY CIRCULAR

This is an original issuance of this AC.

1.2 BACKGROUND

- A. International standards for safety oversight by civil aviation authorities require an evaluation of documents and, in some cases, demonstrations of capability by the organization and individuals before required approvals and authorizations are granted.
- B. The generic process in this advisory circular will be the basis for any granting of these approvals.

1.3 APPLICABILITY

The guidance in this AC is applicable to all organizations or individuals seeking RCAA authorizations, approvals or acceptances for use of documents, procedures, equipment and operations required by the Rwanda civil aviation regulations.

1.4 RELATED REGULATIONS

This advisory circular is directly applicable to all authorizations, approvals or acceptances required by the RCARs

1.5 RELATED PUBLICATIONS

For further information on this topic, organizations are advised to review the following publications and regulatory requirements—

1) Rwanda Civil Aviation Authority

- ◆ AC 05-001; AMO Certification
- ◆ AC 09-001; ATO Certification
- ◆ AC 12-001, AOC Certification

Copies may be obtained from the RCAA-FSS.

2) International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)

- ◆ Annex 6, Part I: Appendix 5(para 6) and Attachment D.

Copies may be obtained from Document Sales Unit, ICAO, 999 University Street, Montreal, Quebec, Canada H3C 5H7.

1.6 DEFINITIONS & ACRONYMS

1.6.1 CERTIFICATION

A. The term, *certification*, is used to describe the overall process of inspector actions to approve, license, or certificate an individual, document, procedure, record or organization.

A “certification” usually involves a document, individual, aircraft or organization that is NOT YET APPROVED for operations in aviation.

B. Depending on its complexity, a certification may include both evaluations and inspections.

- For example, a certification for an original air operator certificate will include a complex series of evaluations to approve the documentation and other arrangements, followed by a battery of inspections before the AOC holder is approved for operations in aviation.
- But the “certification” actions associated with a single revision of a Minimum Equipment List will probably consist only of evaluations conducted by each of the inspector technical specialties prior to approval for use in aviation.

- A certification usually involves a series of CAA Actions (evaluations, inspections and approvals)
- A certification usually involves a series of CAA actions conducted over a period of time.

1.6.2 EVALUATIONS

A. The term, *evaluation*, is used to describe an inspector action taken before the document, procedure, system, aircraft or airmen is approved for use in aviation operations.

- An “evaluation” is an act of auditing for conformance with a published standard before approval.
- In a certification process, evaluations are conducted BEFORE the organization’s submitted processes have been approved.

B. Evaluations are a key part of the Phase 3 of certification process and – for the purposes of selecting Action numbers – are only accomplished before issuance of an authorization, approval, license, or certificate.

C. Any findings during an evaluation are usually transmitted to the applicant as notes of identified deficiencies.

1.6.3 INSPECTIONS

- A. The term, *inspection*, is used to describe a specific inspector action taken after a document, record, procedure, individual or system is *currently approved by the RCAA for use* in aviation.
- B. Inspections are primarily accomplished on an on-going basis after the certification process has been completed.
- C. Inspections are, however, a key part of Phase 4 of a certification process to confirm that the individual or organization is capable of conducting the operations in accordance with their proposed approved documents and procedures.
- D. Any findings during an inspection are usually transmitted to the applicant as safety concerns that have been formally entered in CASORT.

- An “inspection” is an act of auditing for conformance with a published standard after approval.
- In the certification process, inspections are conducted AFTER the organization’s submitted processes have been approved.

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- Safety concerns identified during inspections can be the basis for rescinding approvals.
 - Safety concerns identified in Phase 4 may cause the RCAA to return the applicant to Phase 3 status for corrective actions.

1.6.3.1 Acronyms & Abbreviations

The following acronyms are used in this advisory circular—

- 1) **AC** = Advisory Circular
- 2) **FSS** = RCAA Flight Safety Services
- 3) **RCAA** = Rwanda Civil Aviation Authority
- 4) **RCAR** = Rwanda Civil Aviation Regulations

SECTION 2 GENERIC CERTIFICATION PROCESS

2.1 GENERIC PROCESS

- A. The general process of approval or acceptance of certain operations, programmes, documents, procedures, methods, or systems is an orderly method used by the RCAA-FSS to ensure that such items meet regulatory standards and provide for safe operating practices.
- B. It is a modular, generic process that can be applied to many types of approval or acceptance tasks.
- C. The process consists of five distinct yet related phases which are discussed in detail in this AC.
- D. The resulting RCAA action can be—
- 1) Approving; or
 - 2) Not approving, not accepting or rejecting an applicant's proposal.

Phase	Title of Phase	Keyword for Phase
1	Pre-Application Phase	Information
2	Initial Application Review Phase	Review
3	Document Evaluation Phase	Evaluate
4	Inspection & Demonstration Phase	Inspect
5	Final Certification Actions Phase	Report

2.2 UNDERSTANDING THE PROCESS

This AC provides aid in understanding and applying this process.

- It is essential to understand that this process may result in a decision to not approve or not accept an applicant's proposal.
- The process described is used to assist in making either positive or negative determinations.

2.3 RELATIVE IMPORTANCE OF CERTIFICATION PHASES

- A. Inspectors should not gauge the relative importance of each phase of the certification process by the amount of information presented in this AC or by the numbers or complexity of the requirements. Each phase is equally important.
- B. The Initial (Formal) Application Review phase is an example. While this phase is covered in a relatively small section in the manual compared, for example, to the Inspection and Demonstration phase, it can be the most critical phase of the whole process.

2.4 CERTIFICATION CAN BE A CONTINUING PROCESS

- A. Very few aviation organizations choose to stay in the status under which they were originally certificated.
 - Most will request to add different operations, aircraft, procedures and special authorisations to their approvals.
 - Any such change to the organization creates the need for the RCAA to conduct a supplemental certification to validate their proposed change.
- B. In each of these situations, the RCAA will evaluate the proposal from the perspective of the applicable aviation regulations, international standards and relevant safety oversight practices.
 - The organization must be able to demonstrate to their ability to interface this change into their system without affecting the safety of their operations.
 - This supplemental certification will also be processed through the five phases of certification.

2.5 EXTENT OF CERTIFICATION – SIMPLE REQUEST

- A. The extent to which the RCAA will apply the certification actions in each phase will depend upon the complexity of the request.
- B. For example, a revision to the operations manual could go through the entire process in days and be completed by the assigned inspector.
 - In this case, there would not be a certification team and all of the activities and reports that are associated with the original process.
 - Other examples of simple requests include changes to the checklists, MELs, training syllabi, flight maneuver profiles, etc.

2.6 EXTENT OF CERTIFICATION – COMPLEX REQUEST

- A. A request to upgrade the aircraft from turboprop to turbojet aircraft is an example of a complex request. In the past, this type of change has resulted in dramatic safety issues where conducted improperly and in haste.
- B. The RCAA will apply careful consideration to the complete certification process. *But those*

- Most complex certifications will be treated “formally.”
- A CPM with team will be assigned and a certification plan will be developed

The complexity of the applicant's request or proposal will determine the emphasis in each phase.

certification tasks that are determined not to be affected by the proposed change will usually not be revisited beyond that determination.

- Other examples of complex requests are the addition of EDTO authority, long range operations and re-clearance authority, and upgrading from aircraft with basic flight deck instrumentation to computer controlled automatic operations.

SECTION 3 PHASE 1: PRE-APPLICATION

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|---|-----------------------|-------------|
| 1 | Pre-Application Phase | Information |
|---|-----------------------|-------------|
- A. The keyword for this phase is “information” because this is the phase when the applicant and RCAA share pertinent information to ensure the process is conducted correctly and efficiently.
- B. Phase 1 starts when an organization or individual inquires about or states a need for a change in some aspect of an aviation activity. Phase 1 can be initiated by—
- the Applicant; or
 - the RCAA.

3.1 APPLICANT INITIATION

- A. A person or applicant conveys to the RCAA-FSS a need that is related to its operations or proposed operations.
- This “need” may be a requirement for RCAA-FSS approval, acceptance or issuance of organization certificates.
- For example, an applicant may need, want, or be required to have a minimum equipment list (MEL) change.
 - The applicant initiates the process by inquiring about the correct procedures to receive approval from the RCAA-FSS for the change.
- B. During initial inquiries, it is important for the applicant and RCAA-FSS to become familiar with the subject matter.
- C. If, for example, an applicant requests an operational approval, the RCAA will take the following actions—
- Become thoroughly familiar with existing RCAA policy and approval requirements
 - Become familiar with the appropriate technical material
 - Accurately assess the character and scope of the proposal
 - Determine if a demonstration is required
 - Determine the need for any coordination requirements
 - Ensure that the applicant has a clear understanding of the minimum requirements that constitute an acceptable submission
 - Determine the date the applicant intends to implement the proposal

3.2 RCAA-FSS INITIATION

- A. Phase 1 may also begin when the RCAA-FSS conveys to the applicant or person a requirement related to its operation which must be approved or accepted.
- For example, the RCAA may require an applicant to publish, in the approved company aircraft operating manual, information on low speed buffet.
- B. The applicant must research and understand that subject area before submitting a proposal to the RCAA-FSS for evaluation.
- C. The assigned RCAA inspector will act in an advisory capacity to the applicant during the preparation of the submission. Such advice may include the following—
- The necessity for a deviation, authorisation, waiver, or exemption

- The necessity for required demonstrations
- Clarification of RCAR requirements or advisory information
- Sources of specific technical information
- Acceptable standards for submission

3.3 APPLICANT RESPONSIBILITY

The common element, regardless of whether an action is initiated by an applicant or the RCAA-FSS, is the effort expended by the applicant.

- It is essential (particularly in Phase 1) for the applicant to have a clear understanding that, the RCAA may provide advice and guidance to the company.
- But the development of the final product submitted to the RCAA-FSS is solely the responsibility of the applicant.

3.4 RCAA-FSS/APPLICANT COMMUNICATION

- In Phase 1, the RCAA will assist the applicant to understand the form, content, and documents required for the submission to be acceptable to the RCAA-FSS.
- The applicant should be aware of the need and benefits of submitting required documents as early as possible and of its responsibility to advise the RCAA-FSS, in a timely manner, of any significant changes in the proposal.

3.5 PHASE 1 SUMMARY

Phase 1 of the process is illustrated as follows—

- Applicant makes inquiry or request to RCAA-FSS; or
- RCAA-FSS requires applicant to take an action;
- RCAA-FSS and applicant develop understanding of subject area through meetings and provision of applicable documents and forms;
- Applicant understands form, content, and documents required for an acceptable submission to the RCAA.

The applicant may be required to submit a formal Pre-Application Statement of Intent (PASI)

SECTION 4 PHASE 2: INITIAL (FORMAL) APPLICATION REVIEW

The keyword for this phase is “review” because the RCAA must determine if the applicant has made a submission that is adequate for subsequent RCAA evaluation.

2 Initial Application Review Phase Review

4.1 APPLICANT'S FORMAL SUBMISSION

- Phase 2 begins when the applicant formally submits an application (or proposal) for RCAA-FSS approval.
- The RCAA's first action, in Phase 2, is to review the applicant's submission to ensure that the proposal is clearly defined, and the documentation specified in Phase 1 has been provided.

The submission must conform for the process and content specified by the RCAA.

The required information must be complete and detailed enough to permit a subsequent thorough evaluation of the applicant's capability and competence to fully satisfy the applicable regulations, national policy, and safe operating practices.

4.2 APPLICATION REVIEWED BY RCAA-FSS FOR COMPLETENESS

- A. Phase 2 does not include a detailed operational and technical evaluation or analysis of the submitted information (see Phase 3).
- Some CAAs refer to this as a “cursory review” to emphasize that this phase is not the detailed evaluation that is conducted in Phase 3.
- However, in Phase 2 the submission must be examined in sufficient detail to assess the completeness of the required information.
- B. If the applicant's submission is not complete or the quality is obviously unacceptable, it must be returned immediately with an explanation of the deficiencies, before any further review and evaluation is conducted.
- Normally, unacceptable submissions should be returned with a written explanation of the reasons for its return.

4.3 RESOLVING ISSUES

- A. In complex cases, a meeting with the applicant and its key personnel may be necessary to resolve issues and agree on a mutually acceptable solution.
- Phase 3 will not begin until the contents of the submitted application package conform to the RCAA submission requirements.
- B. If mutual agreements cannot be reached, the RCAA will terminate the meeting, inform the applicant that the submission is unacceptable, and return the submitted package to the applicant.
- If the application is returned to the applicant, the status of the certification process reverts to Phase 1.
 - Phase 2 begins again when the package is resubmitted to the RCAA.

4.4 PHASE 2 SUMMARY

- A. Phase 2 of the process is illustrated as follows—
- 1) Applicant formally submits a proposal or application for RCAA processing;
 - 2) RCAA-FSS makes initial examination of the documents for completeness with respect to requirements identified and established in Phase 1;
 - 3) RCAA-FSS returns submitted proposal to the applicant for further work; or
 - 4) RCAA-FSS accepts submitted proposal.
- It is important that the applicant understands that the process will not proceed to Phase 3 unless the RCAA has advised them formally that the application package is sufficient for future evaluation.
- B. The RCAA will advise the applicant of the status of its proposed application, either in a formal meeting (complex certifications) or by email (simple certifications).

SECTION 5 PHASE 3: DOCUMENT EVALUATION (& CONFORMANCE)

- A. The keyword for this phase is “evaluate” because the RCAA must determine if the applicant proposed documents outline an adequate process design for the proposed operations and conform to the RCARs and other applicable standards.
- 3

Document Evaluation Phase

Evaluate
- B. More complex certifications require the applicant to submit applicable Regulations Compliance Checklists to ensure that they conform to all applicable RCARs in the development of their processes.

5.1 DETAILED ANALYSIS

- A. Phase 3 is the RCAA-FSS's detailed analysis, review, and evaluation of the applicant's proposal. These actions may take place entirely within the RCAA offices, at the site of operations, or at both facilities.
- B. In Phase 3 the RCAA-FSS evaluation is focused on the form, content, and technical quality of the submitted documents to determine that the information in the proposal meets the following criteria—
- Is not contrary to any applicable RCAR requirement
 - Is not contrary to the direction provided in other safety-related documents
 - Provides for safe operating practices

5.2 ADDRESSING DEFICIENCIES

- A. During Phase 3 the RCAA will identify any deficiencies in the submitted material and require that these are corrected by the applicant.
- The RCAA may choose to have a discussion with the applicant regarding certain discrepancies or questions or to obtain additional information.
- B. Normally as these deficiencies are identified, the RCAA will “formally,” but individually, return the applicable documents to the applicant for specific changes.
- C. However, when an inspector determines that, for specific reasons, the material is grossly deficient or unacceptable, the inspector must return the entire submission to the applicant with an appropriate explanation and immediately terminate this phase.
- D. As the results of the evaluations are acceptable, the RCAA will grant individual documents and plans the some form of approval (conditional, initial, or provisional) re continuing with the process.

During Phase 3, identified deficiencies may be resolved informally and will not be treated as safety concerns



- In this case, the entire package will be returned.
- This type of rejection will return the status of the certification to Phase 1.

This approval indicates that RCAA has determined the applicant's proposal is adequate for safe operation pending completion of operational validation in Phase 4.

5.3 APPROVAL OR ACCEPTANCE OF DOCUMENTS

As Phase 3 ends, the RCAA-FSS approves or accepts the applicant's proposed processes, policies, procedures, facilities and equipment as specified in their proposed documents.

- These approvals are subject to actual inspections and demonstrations during Phase 4, as determined to be necessary for safe operations.
- These “document” approvals are treated as “interim” approvals pending completion of the demonstration and validation actions specified by the RCAA.

5.3.1 INDICATING APPROVAL

- A. Approval of this documented methodology is granted by approval letter, by a stamp of approval, by the issuance of operations specifications or by some other official means of conveying approval.
- B. The following are examples of interim approvals granted by the RCAA-FSS—:
- All-weather terminal operations
 - Training programmes
 - MEL
 - Cockpit checklist
 - Company Aircraft Operating Manual (limitations, performance, and operating procedures)

- Air navigation operations

5.3.2 INDICATING ACCEPTANCE

- Other proposals, submissions or requests not requiring specific RCAA-FSS approval but required to be submitted to the RCAA-FSS are items that are presented for acceptance.
- Acceptance of an applicant's proposal may be accomplished by various means, including a letter or email indicating there are no RCAA-FSS objections to the incorporation of the documented processes, procedures and/or records as proposed.

5.4 PHASE 3 SUMMARY

Phase 3 is illustrated as follows—

- RCAA-FSS evaluates the formal submission for compliance with RCAR requirements, compliance with the direction provided in the RCAA-FSS aviation safety publications, other safety-related documents and safe operating practices;
- If the results of RCAA-FSS document evaluation are unsatisfactory, the submission will be returned to the applicant for correction;
- When results of RCAA-FSS documents evaluation are satisfactory and if appropriate, grant interim approval or acceptance.

The applicant will not be allowed to leave Phase 3 until all applicable documents have been approved and/or accepted.

SECTION 6 PHASE 4: INSPECTION & DEMONSTRATION

- The keyword for this phase is "inspect" because the RCAA must determine if the applicant proposed system processes and personnel actually "work" in the reality of the organization's actual operation.

4	Inspection & Demonstration Phase	Inspect
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- The extent of CAA actions in this phase will depend on the complexity of the applicant's proposal. For example—
 - A simple certification process, such as that required for approval of a revision to an MEL, will not require validation of concept because the operator has already demonstrated the ability of its personnel to use an MEL in airline operations.
 - ◆ A ramp inspection may be adequate to determine that the revision has been incorporated and is in use.
 - ◆ But normally this confirmation will be validated by subsequent flight operations in-flight (en-route) inspections.
 - A complex certification process, such as that required for approval of a PBN nav specification, will at a minimum, require the Phase 4 inspections identified in the AOC manual and specified flight operations demonstrations.
- Any safety concerns identified during this phase will be treated "formally" as safety concerns.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● At this phase of the process, the RCAA has approved the applicant's process. ● Identified deficiencies are now safety concerns and may be the basis for rescinding previous approvals.

6.1 RCAA INSPECTION

- In Phase 4 the RCAA-FSS will conduct inspections as necessary to ensure that the applicant is ready for any required demonstrations.

- For most formal certification processes, the RCAA has specified the minimum inspections that will be accomplished.
- B. If any deficiencies or safety concerns are identified, these must be corrected by the applicant immediately.
- C. No demonstrations should be permitted while there are uncorrected deficiencies or safety concerns.

6.2 APPLICANT'S DEMONSTRATION

- A. In Phase 4 the RCAA-FSS will finalize plans to observe and evaluate the applicant's demonstration of its ability to perform in accordance with the procedures, guidelines, and parameters described in the documents receiving interim approval in Phase 3.
- B. Phase 4 is an operational evaluation of the applicant's ability to function in accordance with the methodology approved at the end of Phase 3.
- C. Usually, these demonstrations are required by regulation, and some examples include the following—
- Conduct of training
 - Demonstrations of knowledge
 - Conduct of qualification scenarios
 - Demonstrations of processes
 - Demonstration flights
 - Validation flights

6.3 CONDUCT OF DEMONSTRATIONS

- A. The RCAA will plan for the conduct and observation of the demonstration to include such factors as participants, evaluation criteria, and sequence of events.

6.4 CLARIFICATION OF HANDLING OF SAFETY CONCERNS

6.4.1 MINOR DISCREPANCIES

During these demonstrations it is normal for minor discrepancies to occur.

- Discrepancies can often be resolved during the demonstration by obtaining commitments from responsible company officials.
- The inspector responsible for overseeing a demonstration must evaluate each discrepancy in terms of its overall impact on the applicant's ability and competence to conduct the proposed operation.

6.4.2 GROSS DEFICIENCIES OR UNACCEPTABLE PERFORMANCE

- A. The RCAA will stop conducting the demonstration in Phase 4 when gross deficiencies or unacceptable levels of performance are observed.
- B. The RCAA will then—
- 1) determine must identify the phase of the general process for approval or acceptance to which the applicant must return, or
 - ◆ For example, if an simulator scenario demonstration is unsatisfactory due to equipment failure, it may be appropriate to require the applicant to reenter the process at Phase 4 and conduct another demonstration
 - 2) decide to terminate the process entirely when it is clear that continuation would not result in approval or acceptance.

- ◆ If the demonstration is unacceptable because crew members were unable to perform their assigned duties, it may be appropriate to advise the applicant that the process is terminated pending review and evaluation of the applicant's emergency training programme, and that the applicant may need to reenter the process at phase 2 (that is, submit a new proposal).
- C. If the applicant satisfactorily completes the Inspection and Demonstration Phase, the RCAA will advise the applicant of the satisfactory completion.

6.5 PHASE 4 SUMMARY

- A. Phase 4 of the process is illustrated as follows—
 - 1) RCAA-FSS plans for the conduct and observation of the demonstration;
 - 2) Applicant demonstrates ability;
 - 3) Demonstration unsatisfactory; or
 - 4) Demonstration satisfactory.
- B. For simple certifications, the applicant is usually advised by email or letter to proceed with their operations normally under the interim approvals pending final approvals yet to be issued.
- C. For complex formal certifications, the applicant must now pause operations pending the completion of the Phase 5 issuance of formal certificate and specifications by the RCAA.

SECTION 7 PHASE 5: FINAL CERTIFICATION ACTIONS

- A. The keyword for this phase is “report” because the RCAA must ensure that the evidence of the accomplishment of the applicable certification process has been consolidated for later audits by international organizations.

5

Final Certification Actions Phase

Report

7.1 PHASE 5 CERTIFICATION ACTIONS

- A. For simple certifications, the assigned inspector(s) will—
 - 1) ensure that all required RCAA actions have been accomplished and applicable interim approvals remain in place;
 - 2) determine the need for further actions to complete the validation necessary for final approval actions. If none necessary, ensure the final approvals are issued.
- B. For complex certifications, the CPM will—
 - 1) ensure that all required steps of the formal process have been completed satisfactorily;
 - 2) ensure the proper issuance of the applicable certificate and/or specifications; and
 - 3) then compile and issue a “Completed Certification Report.”

7.2 PHASE 5 SUMMARY

- A. In Phase 5 the RCAA shall—
 - ensure that the certification has been accomplished properly by the team.
 - ensure that the RCAA records demonstrating a proper certification are completed.
 - ensure that the applicant has been issued the appropriate documents of approval.
- B. Sometimes RCAA-FSS approval or acceptance of an applicant's proposal may be interim (conditional) in nature.

- For example, a training programme may be initially approved pending RCAA-FSS evaluation of the flight simulator to be used in that programme.

End of Advisory Circular

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