



**PROCESS & APPLICATION:**  
**EVALUATION OF LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY**

**Purpose**— This advisory circular (AC) provides guidance for individuals and organizations for compliance with the English language proficiency and testing requirements specified in Part 7 of Rwanda Civil Aviation Regulations.

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- Advisory Circulars are intended to provide advice and guidance to illustrate a means, but not necessarily the only means, of complying with the Regulations, or to explain certain regulatory requirements by providing informative, interpretative and explanatory material.
- Where an AC is referred to in a 'Note' below the regulation, the AC remains as guidance material,
- ACs should always be read in conjunction with the referenced regulations.

## **SECTION 1 GENERAL**

### **1.1 STATUS OF THIS ADVISORY CIRCULAR**

This is an original issuance of this AC.

### **1.2 BACKGROUND**

- A. The use (or misuse) of language has been determined to contribute directly or indirectly to accidents. At other times, language is a link in the chain of events which exacerbates the problem.
- B. There are three ways that languages can be a contributing factor in accidents and incidents—
  - 1) Incorrect use of standardized phraseologies;
  - 2) Lack of plain language proficiency; and
  - 3) The use of more than one language in the same airspace.
- C. The International Civil Aviation Organization has adopted language proficiency standards to ensure a minimum English language proficiency for international air traffic control communications.
- D. As a signatory to the ICAO Convention, Rwanda complies with these Standards as outlined in this advisory circular.
- E. Holders of pilot, flight engineer, air traffic control licence and radiotelephone operator licences are required to demonstrate speaking and understanding English language at or above operational level (Level 4), of the Rating Scale as established in the Civil Aviation (Personnel Licensing) Regulations.
- F. The RCAA has established an acceptable manner to meet the international standards for the appropriate licence holders or applicants to demonstrate compliance with the holistic descriptors and the language
- G. Proficiency level stated in the Appendix 1 to 7.205 to the Civil Aviation (Personnel Licensing) Regulations. The process involves testing using an Instrument adopted by the RCAA for the purpose.
- H. The six elements of linguistic descriptors which are considered in the testing are Pronunciation, Structure (grammar), Vocabulary, Fluency, Comprehension and Interactions.
- I. The testing serves two purposes—
  - 1) It fulfills the Civil Aviation (Personnel Licensing) Regulations provisions requiring that pilots, flight engineer, controllers and radiotelephone operators demonstrate language proficiency sufficient for safe and efficient radiotelephony communications; and
  - 2) It provides benchmarks by which the requirement and effectiveness of English language training and learning may be determined or evaluated.

### **1.3 APPLICABILITY**

This AC is applicable to all individuals who intend to exercise unrestricted privileges of certain licenses issued by the RCAA. These licenses include—

- 1) Private pilots of aeroplanes, helicopters, powered lift and airships;
  - 2) Commercial pilots of aeroplanes, helicopters, powered lift and airships;
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- 3) All holders of instrument ratings;
- 4) Airline transport pilot of aeroplanes and helicopters;
- 5) Flight instructors for aeroplanes, helicopters and instruments;
- 6) Aeronautical station operators;
- 7) Air traffic controllers; and
- 8) All other persons who elect to have a license endorsement for radiotelephone operator privileges.

## 1.4 RELATED REGULATIONS

The following regulations are directly applicable to the guidance contained in this advisory circular—

- RCAR Part 7, Personnel Licensing
- RCAR Part 14, AOC Personnel Qualification

## 1.5 RELATED PUBLICATIONS

For further information on this topic, individuals are invited to consult the following ICAO publications—

- ◆ Annex 1, Personnel Licensing
- ◆ Document 9835-AN/453, Manual on the Implementation of ICAO Language Proficiency Requirements
- ◆ Circular 318, Language Testing Criteria for Global Harmonization
- ◆ Circular 323, Guidelines for Aviation English Training Programmes

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

## 1.6 DEFINITIONS & ACRONYMS

### 1.6.1 DEFINITIONS

A. The following definitions are used in this advisory circular—

- 1) **Accent.** A distinctive pronunciation of a language which is usually associated with a geographical region (for first language speakers) or with the phonological influence of another mother tongue (for second or foreign language speakers). All speakers of all languages have an accent.
- 2) **Dialect.** A distinctive variety of a language, usually associated with social or geographical distinctions, which is characterized by differences in accent, vocabulary and grammar with regard to other varieties of the same language.
- 3) **Language proficiency skills.** The knowledge and abilities which impact on the capacity of a given individual to communicate spontaneously, accurately, intelligibly, meaningfully and appropriately in a given language
- 4) **Operational rater** or **Operational assessor.** A rater/assessor whose assessment will focus not only on the linguistic features of a candidate's performance but also on the appropriateness of a candidate's performance in a test with regard to professional standards and procedures (compare with "language rater/assessor").
- 5) **Plain language.** The spontaneous, creative and non-coded use of a given natural language
- 6) **Response.** The candidate's linguistic performance elicited by the input of a test item (e.g. an answer to a question).

- 7) **Test delivery.** The physical means by which test input is made available to the test-taker during test administration (e.g. paper documents, computer screen, audio sound-source, face-to-face encounter, etc.).
- 8) **Test examiner.** A suitably qualified and trained person who assigns a score to a candidate's performance in a test based on a judgement usually involving the matching of features of the performance to descriptors on a rating scale.
- 9) **Test-taker.** The person who is tested.

### 1.6.2 ACRONYMS

The following acronyms are used in this manual—

- 1) **AEPT** = Aviation English Proficiency Test
- 2) **AOC** = Air Operator Certificate
- 3) **RCAR** = Rwanda Aviation Safety Regulation
- 4) **RCAA** = Rwanda Civil Aviation Authority
- 5) **RCAA-FSS** = RCAA Flight Safety Services
- 6) **ICAO** = International Civil Aviation Organization
- 7) **SARPs** = ICAO Standards and Recommended Practices

## SECTION 2 AVIATION LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY TESTING FOR LICENCE ENDORSEMENT

### 2.1 EAST AFRICA COORDINATION

- A. The guidance in this AC is to acquaint test takers to the methodology used for to demonstrate the ability to speak and understand English language at or above operational level as specified under Appendix 1 to 7.025 to the Regulations.
- B. It also provides a brief on the test instrument EAC ALP 1 and EAC ALP 2 adopted by the East African Partner States as the instrument for testing the licensed personnel to demonstrate their English language proficiency.
- C. English Language Proficiency examiners will be using the methodology outlined in this AC in order to enable them carry out these duties effectively and efficiently.

### 2.2 STANDARD PROCEDURES

- A. While the Regulations establish testing requirements on the language proficiency, the development of tests and testing procedures are accomplished by the RCAA, together with the maintenance of oversight responsibility.
- B. Language speaking proficiency tests require that certain specific procedures be used and this requirement will guide the implementation or development of tests for aviation language proficiency.

### 2.3 REFERENCES

- A. Part 7 of the Civil Aviation (Personnel Licensing) Regulations specifying requirements for English Language proficiency for pilot, flight engineer, air traffic control and radiotelephone operator licence holders;
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- B. Various Regulations in the Civil Aviation (Personnel Licensing) Regulations specifying speaking and understanding English Language as a requirement for grant of the specific aviation licence;
- C. Parts 10 and 14 of the regulations requiring air operators or owner of aircraft to ensure using flight crew who speaks and understands English language;

## SECTION 3 WHAT TO EXPECT WHEN TESTING

Proficiency tests are administered directly, through face-to-face contact between tester and test taker, or semi-directly, through recorded speaking prompts and recorded responses.

According to ICAO, tests that do not evaluate speaking and/or listening skills directly, either through direct interaction or through an audio or video-taped exchange, are not appropriate to meet the requirements of the ICAO language proficiency testing guidelines.

### 3.1 TEST INSTRUMENT

- A. The RCAA with the assistance of the USA FAA, has adopted a Test Instrument to be known as EAC Aviation Language Proficiency Tests 1 and 2 (EAC ALP 1 and EAC ALP 2).
  - The test materials are based on the FAA Aviation English Practicum: Testing Course 15007.
  - The EAC Partner States have adopted this Test Instrument as the Instrument to be used in the States for English language proficiency testing.s.
- B. EAC ALP 1 is a “written” paper consisting of a set of multiple-choice questions which the test takers, having listened to an audio played to them, are required to select and mark their response on paper.
  - A CD is played and the test taker is assessed on Vocabulary and Comprehension. It is used for placement of the candidate.
- C. EAC ALP 2 is Oral part where a conversation between the test-taker and the Examiner takes place.
  - The conversation/interview is recorded and is used for assessing the five holistic descriptors in line with the provisions of the Aviation Language Proficiency rating scale.

#### 3.1.1 ELIGIBILITY

Holders or applicants of pilot, flight engineers, air traffic control and radiotelephone licences are eligible for the examination to demonstrate the ability to speak and understand English as required by the Regulations.

License holders will be required to be tested in both EAC ALP 1 and 2.

### 3.2 SET-UP OF TESTING ENVIRONMENT

#### 3.2.1 GENERAL

- A. Pilots, air traffic controllers, flight engineers and flight radio-telephone operators are tested in context similar to that in which they work. The test content should therefore be relevant to their roles in the work-place.
- B. The test provides the test-takers with sufficient and varied opportunities to use plain language in aviation work related context in order to demonstrate their ability with respect to each holistic descriptor in the Language Proficiency Rating scale shown in Appendix 1 to 7.205 to the Civil Aviation (Personnel Licensing) Regulations.

### 3.2.2 SET UP REQUIREMENTS

#### 3.2.2.1 Equipment

Tape recorder/recording device, good microphone, a computer with speakers and appropriate seating place/office.

- All interviews are to be conducted in a similar way, in appropriately professional atmosphere where all test-takers will be able to display their English proficiency with a minimum of either stress, or intimidation, or favoritism.

#### 3.2.2.2 Location

One-to-one interview shall be conducted in a quiet room with no interruption.

The written paper may be conducted with any number of test-takers in the same room.

- There should be almost no outside noise heard in the room.
- There should be no one in the room other than the examiners and the test-taker.
- Those waiting to take the interview must be held outside of the test room, and unable to hear any of the interview proceedings before their turn.

#### 3.2.2.3 Protocol

There should be a calm, relaxed but business like professional atmosphere in the interview room.

- Briefly introduce any other personnel present in the room.
- Once the interview has started, there should be no talk other than that required for the interview.
- As the test-taker sits, the Aviation English Result Form: CAA-O-PEL025 will be prepared with the test-takers name and address.

#### 3.2.2.4 Seating

As a rule the testing should always be conducted by a minimum of two qualified examiners.

- The examiner conducting the interview and the test-taker should be seated no more than 2m apart at the same table.
- These may be on the same or opposite side of the table.
- The second examiner will be seated off to one side so that the notes he makes are out of view of test taker.

## 3.3 TEST PROCEDURES – EAC ALP 2

### 3.3.1 INITIAL BRIEFING

- A. There will be a tape recorder/recording device be on the table in view of the test taker.
- B. The test-taker will be briefed on the test and the assessment method to be used after he/she has seated him/herself and that he/she is going to be recorded.
- C. The test-taker will be shown that the examiners are going to work using a prepared list of instructions.

### 3.3.2 RECORDING

After the test-taker has settled and is comfortable enough, the examiners will begin both testing and recording.

### 3.3.3 THE INTERVIEW

- A. The aim is to provide the test-takers with a sample of natural speech on work-related topics.

- B. While using the set of questions provided, the examiner will adjust for flow and naturalness to allow the test-taker to demonstrate their speaking ability in full.
- C. The examiners will maintain a sincerely interest and professional, non-deferential tone at all times.
- D. The examiners will avoid oral fillers and will not give thanks or comment after each item.
  - 1) The examiners may be required to encourage/elicit/draw out further speech but only twice, and will otherwise continue to the next point without comment.
  - 2) The examiners will keep all notes made during the interview for later reference if needed

### 3.4 TEST PROCEDURES – EAC ALP 1

#### 3.4.1 WRITTEN EXAMINATION

- A. This is a written paper and it can be conducted for as many test-takers as the room can comfortably take taking into account that every test-taker shall be able to hear the played CD with minimum effort. The test-takers will be briefed on the test. It is a written paper.
- B. Question papers and answer sheets will be distributed before playing the test CD.
- C. The Audio CD is played and the test taker(s) listening ability is tested for Vocabulary and comprehension.
  - Having listened to an audio CD played to them, the test-takers are required to select a response from multiple choice options provided and mark their responses on paper.
  - The exercise depicts the actual situation of the cockpit and or control tower.

#### 3.4.2 SCORING PROCEDURES

- A. The scoring shall be done as soon as possible following the interview.
- B. For EAC ALP 1 the paper marking will be done in accordance with the marking scheme provided, after the completion of the test. The pass-mark is 70%.
- C. For EAC ALP 2 each of the two examiners assesses individually each speech sample for all the six elements (Pronunciation, Structure, Vocabulary, Fluency, Comprehension and Interaction) in according to the rating scale.
  - The two assessments are compared where the lower scale marked is the score level to be granted.
  - In case there is a difference of above 1 in an element, the two assessors should discuss and if they do not reach an agreement, the candidate's speech sample will be referred to a different set of examiners for assessment.

## SECTION 4 MISCELLANEOUS

### 4.1 RE-SIT & APPEALS

- A. A candidate who scores less than 70% in EAC ALP 1 test only may be allowed to re-sit the examination after making appropriate arrangements, depending on availability of examiners.
- B. A candidate failing to achieve operational level 4, will be required to undergo Aviation English training and show proof of completion of the approved course before being allowed to re-sit the ALP 2 test.

Three consecutive failures will necessitate the candidate to attend a training course approved by the RCAA.

- C. Candidates are allowed to appeal within two weeks of the results.
- When the appeal is received and accepted the RCAA will constitute a panel of two new examiners from the EAC Region to conduct fresh assessment on the recorded speech samples.
  - The cost of the review shall be met by the test-taker.

#### **4.2 SECURITY & RETENTION OF RECORDS**

Test records and rating rationale will be retained by the RCAA until the test is repeated or superseded by other test of equivalent scope and detail, or for two years after the licence of the candidate to which they refer has been permanently withdrawn, canceled or revoked.

#### **4.3 LICENCE ENDORSEMENT RECOMMENDATION**

- A. The examiners when a test-taker has scored Proficiency level 4 and above, and has 70% pass in ALP 1 test will submit a recommendation to the Personnel Licensing section for his/her licence to be endorsed accordingly. The recommendation dully signed by both examiners shall be through Form CAA-O-PEL025of which the first part is completed by the test-taker prior to the examination.
- B. Upon receipt of the recommendation, personnel licensing official shall complete the checklist No. CL-PEL025 and if all areas are fully and satisfactory covered the licence will be endorsed.

*End of Advisory Circular*

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