

Introduction

Airman Certification Standards Concept

The goal of the airman certification process is to ensure the applicant possesses the knowledge, ability to manage risks, and skill consistent with the privileges of the certificate or rating being exercised, in order to act as Pilot-in-command (PIC).

In fulfilling its responsibilities for the airman certification process, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Flight Standards Service (AFS) plans, develops, and maintains materials related to airman certification training and testing. These materials include several components. The FAA knowledge test measures mastery of the aeronautical knowledge areas listed in Title 14 of the Code of Federal Regulations (14 CFR) part 61. Other materials, such as handbooks in the FAA-H-8083 series, provide guidance to applicants on aeronautical knowledge, risk management, and flight proficiency.

Safe operations in today's National Airspace System (NAS) require integration of aeronautical knowledge, risk management, and flight proficiency standards. To accomplish these goals, the FAA drew upon the expertise of organizations and individuals across the aviation and training community to develop the Airman Certification Standards (ACS). The ACS integrates the elements of knowledge, risk management, and skill listed in 14 CFR part 61 for each airman certificate or rating. It thus forms a more comprehensive standard for what an applicant must know, consider, and do for the safe conduct and successful completion of each Task to be tested on both the qualifying FAA knowledge test and the oral and flight portions of the practical test.

During the ground and flight portion of the practical test, the FAA expects evaluators to assess the applicant's mastery of the topic in accordance with the level of learning most appropriate for the specified Task. The oral questioning will continue throughout the entire practical test. For some topics, the evaluator will ask the applicant to describe or explain. For other items, the evaluator will assess the applicant's understanding by providing a scenario that requires the applicant to appropriately apply and/or correlate knowledge, experience, and information to the circumstances of the given scenario. The flight portion of the practical test requires the applicant to demonstrate knowledge, risk management, flight proficiency, and operational skill in accordance with the ACS.

Note: *As used in the ACS, an evaluator is any person authorized to conduct airman testing (e.g., an FAA Aviation Safety Inspector (ASI), Designated Pilot Examiner (DPE), or other individual authorized to conduct test for a certificate or rating).*

Using the ACS

The ACS consists of **Areas of Operation** arranged in a logical sequence, beginning with Preflight Preparation and ending with Postflight Procedures. Each Area of Operation includes **Tasks** appropriate to that Area of Operation. Each Task begins with an **Objective** stating what the applicant should know, consider, and/or do. The ACS then lists the aeronautical knowledge, risk management, and skill elements relevant to the specific Task, along with the conditions and standards for acceptable performance. The ACS uses **Notes** to emphasize special considerations. The ACS uses the terms "will" and "must" to convey directive (mandatory) information. The term "may" denotes items that are recommended but not required. The **References** for each Task indicate the source material for Task elements. For example, in Tasks such as "Weather products required for preflight planning, current and forecast weather for departure, en route, and arrival phases of flight." (PA.I.C.K2), the applicant should be prepared for questions on any weather product presented in the references for that Task.

The abbreviation(s) within parentheses immediately following a Task refer to the category and/or class airplane appropriate to that Task. The meaning of each abbreviation is as follows:

ASEL: Airplane – Single-Engine Land
ASES: Airplane – Single-Engine Sea
AMEL: Airplane – Multiengine Land
AMES: Airplane – Multiengine Sea

Note: *When administering a test, the Tasks appropriate to the class airplane (ASEL, ASES, AMEL, or AMES) used for the test must be included in the plan of action. The absence of a class indicates the Task is for all classes.*

Each Task in the ACS is coded according to a scheme that includes four elements. For example:

PA.XI.A.K1:

- PA** = Applicable ACS (Private Pilot – Airplane)
- XI** = Area of Operation (Night Operations)
- A** = Task (Night Preparation)
- K1** = Task element Knowledge 1 (Physiological aspects of vision related to night flying.)

Knowledge test questions correspond to the ACS codes, which will ultimately replace the system of Learning Statement Codes (LSC). After this transition occurs, the Airman Knowledge Test Report (AKTR) will list an ACS code that correlates to a specific Task element for a given Area of Operation and Task. Remedial instruction and re-testing will be specific, targeted, and based on specified learning criteria. Similarly, a Notice of Disapproval for the practical test will use the ACS codes to identify the deficient Task elements. Applicants and evaluators should interpret the AKTR codes using the ACS revision in effect on the date of the knowledge test.

However, for knowledge tests taken before this system comes on line, only the LSC code (e.g., “PLT058”) will be displayed on the AKTR. The LSC codes link to references and broad subject areas. By contrast, each ACS code represents a unique Task element in the ACS. Because of this fundamental difference, there is no one-to-one correlation between Learning Statement (PLT) codes and ACS codes.

Because all active knowledge test questions for the Private Pilot Airplane (PAR) Knowledge Test now align with the corresponding ACS, evaluators can use LSC codes in conjunction with this ACS for targeting retesting of missed knowledge subject areas. The evaluator should look up the LSC code(s) on the applicant’s AKTR in the Learning Statement Reference Guide available using the following link: [Learning Statement Reference Guide](#). After noting the subject area(s), the evaluator can use the corresponding Area(s) of Operation/Task(s) in the ACS to narrow the scope of material for retesting, and to evaluate the applicant’s understanding of that material in the context of the appropriate ACS Area(s) of Operation and Task(s).

Applicants for a combined Private Pilot Certificate with Instrument Rating, in accordance with 14 CFR part 61, section 61.65 (a) and (g), must pass all areas designated in the Private Pilot – Airplane ACS and the Instrument Rating – Airplane ACS. Evaluators need not duplicate Tasks. For example, only one preflight demonstration would be required; however, the Preflight Task from the Instrument Rating – Airplane ACS would be more extensive than the Preflight Task from the Private Pilot – Airplane ACS to ensure readiness for Instrument Flight Rules (IFR) flight.

A combined certificate and rating evaluation should be treated as one practical test, requiring only one application and resulting in only one temporary certificate, disapproval notice, or letter of discontinuance, as applicable. Failure of any Task will result in a failure of the entire test and application. Therefore, even if the deficient maneuver was instrument related and the performance of all visual flight rules (VFR) Tasks was determined to be satisfactory, the applicant will receive a notice of disapproval.

The applicant must pass the Private Pilot Airplane (PAR) Knowledge Test before taking the private pilot practical test. The practical test is conducted in accordance with the ACS and FAA regulations that are current as of the date of the test. Further, the applicant must pass the ground portion of the practical test before beginning the flight portion.

The ground portion of the practical test allows the evaluator to determine whether the applicant is sufficiently prepared to advance to the flight portion of the practical test. The oral questioning will continue throughout the entire practical test.

Evaluators conduct the practical test in accordance with the current ACS and FAA regulations, and the FAA encourages applicants and instructors to use the ACS when preparing for knowledge tests and practical tests. The FAA will revise the ACS as circumstances require. However, if an applicant is entitled to credit for Areas of Operation previously passed as indicated on a Notice of Disapproval or Letter of Discontinuance, evaluators should continue using the ACS effective on the test cycle start date.