

NOTICE

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION

N 8900.365

National Policy

Effective Date:
6/8/16

Cancellation Date:
6/8/17

SUBJ: Use of Airman Certification Standards in Lieu of Practical Test Standards

1. Purpose of This Notice. This notice explains the Airman Certification Standards (ACS) and authorizes use of the appropriate ACS in lieu of the practical test standards (PTS) to conduct both oral and flight portions of the practical test for the Private Pilot Certificate with an airplane category and/or the instrument-airplane rating. The use of the ACS in lieu of the PTS is also authorized when developing and approving training course outlines (TCO) for pilot schools in accordance with Title 14 of the Code of Federal Regulations (14 CFR) part 141 or any other instance where the previous Private Pilot-Airplane (PAR) or Instrument-Airplane PTS is the referenced standards document.

2. Audience. The primary audience for this notice includes all aviation safety inspectors (ASI) and Designated Pilot Examiners (DPE) who conduct practical testing for the Private Pilot Certificate with an airplane category and/or the instrument-airplane rating, or who oversee evaluators conducting such practical tests. This also includes ASIs having oversight of part 141 pilot schools conducting training and testing in accordance with approved TCOs or any other instance where the previous PAR or Instrument-Airplane PTS is the referenced standards document. The secondary audience includes Flight Standards Service (AFS) branches and divisions in the regions and in headquarters (HQ).

3. Where You Can Find This Notice. You can find this notice on the MyFAA employee Web site at https://employees.faa.gov/tools_resources/orders_notices. Inspectors can access this notice through the Flight Standards Information Management System (FSIMS) at <http://fsims.avs.faa.gov>. Operators can find this notice on the Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA) Web site at <http://fsims.faa.gov>. This notice is available to the public at http://www.faa.gov/regulations_policies/orders_notices.

4. Background. To address longstanding industry concerns about the quality and relevance of the FAA's airman testing standards (ATS), knowledge exams, and training materials, in September 2011, the FAA chartered an Aviation Rulemaking Committee (ARC) to make recommendations on the content, process, methodology, and priorities for updating these products. The ARC, which included broad representation from industry associations, universities, training providers, and professional associations, submitted its report and nine recommendations to the FAA in April 2012. The ARC's key recommendation called for the FAA to integrate knowledge and risk management elements for each PTS skill into a single ACS document.

a. Airman Testing Standards and Training (ATST) Working Group (WG).

(1) In August 2012, the industry-led Aviation Rulemaking Advisory Committee (ARAC) established the ATST WG to develop proposed ACS documents for the Private Pilot Certificate with an airplane category, flight instructors with an airplane category rating, and the instrument-airplane rating. The FAA received the ARAC ATST WG's report and recommendations on September 30, 2013.

(2) The ATST WG report included proposed ACS documents for the Private Pilot Certificate, commercial pilot certificate, flight instructor certificate, and the instrument rating, all in the airplane category. These documents have been further refined through the activities of the ARAC Airman Certification System Working Group (ACS WG), and development continues on the ACS for the Commercial Pilot, the Airline Transport Pilot (ATP), and the Flight Instructor Certificates, all in the airplane category.

b. FAA Review and Implementation. An FAA team consisting of subject matter experts (SME) from appropriate policy divisions (the Air Transportation Division (AFS-200), Flight Technologies and Procedures Division (AFS-400), Regulatory Support Division (AFS-600), and General Aviation and Commercial Division (AFS-800)) carefully reviewed the industry-developed ACS documents for the Private Pilot Certificate in the airplane category and the instrument-airplane rating, validated the content/approach, and verified that the ACS incorporates each task in the existing PTS to the present performance standard. Consistent with the goal of improving the FAA's ATS through the integrated ACS approach, the ACS consolidates redundant PTS tasks or task elements. It also moves the knowledge elements previously defined in the FAA-G-8082-XX series, Test Authorization and Learning Statement Code reference documents, and risk management elements, including items listed in the PTS introduction under "special emphasis," from each PTS task into the appropriate ACS categories. For each Area of Operation (AOO)/task, the ACS thus offers an integrated and logical presentation of the task elements that an applicant must know, consider, and do for safe operation in the National Airspace System (NAS) for each operation and phase of flight. In summary, the ACS provides a holistic presentation of the standards an applicant must meet in both the knowledge testing and final practical testing phases of the certification process.

(1) Since the summer of 2014, the FAA has supported the ACS WG in conducting a series of prototype training and testing programs using the ACS documents for the Private Pilot Certificate in the airplane category and the instrument-airplane rating. Based on feedback from applicants, instructors, evaluators, and FAA ASIs involved in the prototype programs, the FAA has determined that the ACS is a significant enhancement to the PTS because it offers an integrated presentation of the knowledge, risk management, and skill elements that an applicant must master in both the knowledge testing and practical testing phases of the certification process.

(2) Accordingly, the FAA has decided to adopt the ACS framework and is taking the steps necessary to replace the existing PTS model with the integrated ACS, starting with the Private Pilot Certificate in the airplane category and the instrument-airplane rating. Effective June 15, 2016, ASIs, DPEs, and other authorized evaluators will use the PAR ACS and/or the Instrument Rating Airplane (IRA) ACS as the basis for developing and approving TCOs and the

required plan of action to conduct the practical test or any other instance where the previous PAR or Instrument-Airplane PTS is the referenced standards document. Since the ACS incorporates each task in the existing PTS to the present performance standard, existing approved TCOs need only replace references to the PTS with “ACS.”

(3) The FAA does not expect use of the ACS to lengthen or substantially change the conduct of the practical test, which continues to focus on the applicant’s mastery of the skill elements in each task. In fact, use of the ACS should streamline the practical test for two reasons. First, the FAA has ensured that questions on the knowledge tests for the Private Pilot Certificate in the airplane category and instrument-airplane rating are aligned with the knowledge and risk management elements defined for each ACS task. Second, the ACS format can enable evaluators to more efficiently sample the applicant’s mastery of knowledge and risk management elements associated with any given skill. The eventual ability to print the standards-based ACS codes in lieu of today’s reference-based Learning Statement Codes on the Airman Knowledge Test Report (AKTR) will further streamline the oral portion of the practical test by allowing evaluators to more efficiently retest items the applicant missed on the knowledge exam. In the interim, evaluators should include ACS codes in the Remarks section when completing FAA Form 8060-5, Notice of Disapproval of Application, and Letters of Discontinuance.

(4) The oral and flight portions of the practical test must be conducted in accordance with the Examiner Test Guide (Figures 7-8A and 7-8B) in the current edition of FAA Order 8900.2, General Aviation Airman Designee Handbook; the performance metrics set forth in the appropriate PTS or ACS; and the procedures found in either 14 CFR part 61, § 61.43(a) or part 141, § 141.67(c). Use of the ACS will meet these requirements, and any reference(s) to the use of the PTS should be considered synonymous with the ACS.

5. Guidance.

a. Airman Testing Standards Branch (AFS-630) Web Site. ASIs with oversight for DPEs and individuals authorized to conduct practical tests should become familiar with the ACS information published on the AFS-630 Web site at https://www.faa.gov/training_testing/testing/. Available material includes:

- Copies of the PAR ACS and the Instrument-Airplane Rating ACS;
- ACS Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ);
- An explanation of ACS coding;
- Sample PAR and Instrument-Airplane Rating knowledge tests with ACS codes;
- A PowerPoint presentation on the ACS; and
- An ACS informational brochure.

b. ACS Focus Team. The FAA has established an ACS Focus Team to field questions and resolve any issues that may arise during implementation of the ACS. Information about the team can be found in Appendix A.

6. Disposition. We will incorporate the information in this notice into Order 8900.1 before this notice expires. Please direct any questions or comments concerning the information in this notice or the use of the ACS to a member of the ACS Focus Team by email at 9-AVS-ACS-Focus-Team@faa.gov.



John S. Duncan
Director, Flight Standards Service

Appendix A. Flight Standards Service Airman Certification Standards Focus Team**Purpose:**

The Flight Standards Service Director (AFS-1) has established the Airman Certification Standards (ACS) Focus Team to maintain a consistent, ongoing leadership emphasis and oversight of ACS alignment, policy and training development, and implementation within the Flight Standards Service (AFS), and also to serve as the AFS focal point for related work in coordination with or on behalf of Aviation Safety (AVS) and the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) in general.

Focus Team Mission:

- Handle day-to-day questions and feedback;
- Develop and support ACS messaging and metrics;
- Develop and maintain ACS-related policy and training; and
- Maintain regional interfaces.

Personnel:

First	Last	Division/Role	Email
Susan	Parson	AFS-3A ACS Focus Team Lead	Susan.Parson@faa.gov
Bob	Newell	AFS-630	Robert.L.Newell@faa.gov
Chris	Morris	AFS-630	Christopher.Morris@faa.gov
Trey	McClure	AFS-810	Trey.McClure@faa.gov
Larry	Enlow	ASO	Larry.Enlow@faa.gov
Kevin	Clover	FAASTeam (outreach)	Kevin.L.Clover@faa.gov
Barbara	Adams	AFS-280	Barbara.Adams@faa.gov

Leadership:

The ACS Focus Team Lead reports to AFS-1. The Team Lead is the focal point for communication between the team and other stakeholders, unless otherwise delegated. The team's work is on behalf of AFS-1, with near-term policy and training alignment efforts managed as an AFS-1 Priority Project as outlined in AFS-002-103, Directive and Advisory Circular Production, Appendix B, Process for AFS-1 Priority Projects.

Coordination:

We must work interdependently to communicate and collaborate up, down, and across the organization and use critical thinking to solve problems in creative and innovative ways while ensuring that outcomes are consistent with statutes, regulations, policies, and the specific circumstances. When in doubt as to the appropriate procedures or policy to follow, or if you have suggestions to improve the ACS or its implementation, contact the ACS Focus Team for clarification. Please keep Front Line Managers (FLM) and office managers informed. The ACS Focus Team will coordinate with the appropriate regional branches and policy divisions.

Communication and Feedback:

Submit suggestions, questions, or concerns on the ACS to:

- The ACS Focus Team at 9-AVS-ACS-Focus-Team@faa.gov.
- An ACS Focus Team member directly.
- The Flight Standards Information Management System (FSIMS) Librarian.
- The AFS Monthly Message Feedback Mailbox.

We look forward to your feedback to continuously improve the content and communication of the ACS and policy.