



## FLIGHT CREW LICENSING

# General competency—pilots



Learn about general competency obligations for pilots. The general competency rule is contained in regulation 61.385 of the Civil Aviation Safety Regulations (1998).

### Who should read this information sheet?

- > Pilots
- > Flying training organisations
- > Flight instructors
- > Flight examiners
- > Training and checking organisations
- > Operators

### What is the general competency rule for pilots?

The general competency rule is a cornerstone of safe operations. Before commencing a flight, pilots must ask themselves 'Am I capable of conducting the operation safely?'.

This is the equivalent of the medical 'fitness to fly' question, but relates to the technical and operational aspects of flying. It means pilots need to be sure they are fit to fly in all respects.

The rule is contained in Regulation 61.385 of the Civil Aviation Safety Regulations (CASR) 1998. It applies to all flight crew licence holders, from recreational pilots through to professional air transport pilots.

In addition to meeting other regulatory requirements, the rule says pilots can only fly a particular class or type of aircraft, in a particular kind of operation, if they are competent to do so. This means meeting the standards set out in the [Part 61 Manual of Standards](#).

### What is the Part 61 Manual of Standards?

The Part 61 Manual of Standards contains the aeronautical knowledge and practical flight standards for all Part 61 licences, ratings and endorsements. These standards are used by training organisations and instructors to develop and conduct training courses; by instructors and examiners to conduct competency assessments, flight tests, proficiency checks and flight reviews; and by CASA for approving and monitoring training courses.



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### What does the general competency rule cover?

The general competency rule prescribes that pilots must be competent in all aspects of operating an aircraft. This includes:

- › operating the aircraft's navigation and operation systems such as fuel, hydraulics, electrical systems, avionics, pressurisation, power-plants and cockpit displays
- › conducting all normal, abnormal and emergency flight procedures for the aircraft
- › applying the operational limitations such as critical speeds for stalling and operating landing gear and flaps
- › flight planning procedures, like planning for endurance or range capabilities
- › weight and balance requirements, including not exceeding the maximum take-off weight and centre of gravity limits
- › applying aircraft performance data, including take-off and landing performance data to determine what take-off and landing distances are required under the prevailing conditions.

The rule also covers the competent use of an airborne collision and avoidance system (ACAS) where one is fitted to the aircraft and is operating. The rule extends to exercising the privileges of ratings and endorsements.



## Why is a general competency rule included in the regulations?

The general competency rule has been included for two reasons. The first is to ensure that all pilots consider whether they are competent to conduct a flight. This is about good practice.

The second relates to the licensing system. Under new flight crew licensing rules that started on 1 September 2014, class ratings for many aircraft were introduced. Under the old regulations, type-specific endorsements were required.

The rule recognises that even when a pilot is appropriately authorised to operate an aircraft, similar aircraft—such as those within a class—can be different to operate. They might have different avionics and technology (like electronic flight information system or analogue displays) or variations in models originating from the manufacturer (resulting in different performance and handling characteristics).

They may also have different fuel systems, maximum and minimum operating weights, centre of gravity envelopes and critical operating speeds. A pilot can only operate an aircraft if they are competent to do so. Regardless of your authorisations, this may mean you need to undertake additional training to learn different systems, procedures or processes.

Pilots should also consider how familiar they are with a particular kind of operation, especially if they have not conducted that kind of operation recently.

### Case 1

Carol has experience on a single-engine, normally aspirated, class-rated aeroplane with analogue instrumentation, and wants to operate a Cirrus SR22T. Although Carol is authorised to fly the Cirrus (a single-engine, class-rated aeroplane), the general competency rule requires her to be competent operating the Cirrus electronic flight instrument system, turbocharging and operating specific equipment such as the oxygen system and ballistic parachute system. While Carol undertakes this training with her flight instructor, it does not result in a flight crew licence authorisation being granted or a transaction with CASA. This is because Carol has not changed her authorisations—she has simply adapted her competence to operate the SR22T safely.



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### Who can provide training to satisfy the general competency rule?

Training for the purpose of satisfying the general competency rule can only be given by a pilot who holds a flight instructor rating and appropriate training endorsements. The pilot undertaking the training must also be authorised to fly the class or type of aircraft and conduct the operation.

Because general competency flight training does not require regulatory approval, it can be conducted by any appropriately authorised flight instructor and does not need to be completed through a Part 141 or Part 142 flight training organisation.

### How do I record my general competency training?

All flight time must be recorded in a pilot's log book. However, because general competency training does not directly result in the issue of an authorisation under CASR Part 61, there is no need to notify CASA when you complete it. However, you still need to record your flight time and training activities. You can do this by listing it in your log book as training for the purpose of satisfying the general competency rule.

While it is not a regulatory requirement, flying training organisations may also consider issuing a certificate to individuals that records the successful completion of the training activity.

### Who is responsible for ensuring competence?

Ultimately, responsibility for ensuring you are competent to operate an aircraft safely rests with you, the pilot.

The general competency rule provides some flexibility and relief from administrative burden, but this comes with additional responsibility. Although you are licensed, rated and endorsed to fly certain aircraft in certain operations or activities, you have a duty to ensure you are competent to do so.

### Want to know more?

➤ Visit the [Licensing Regulations](#) section.