

General Aviation Pilot Licensing Review Phase 2: Balloons

Summary of planned changes

CAP 3032D



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Introduction

This document contains a summary of key changes in the balloon category that will result from the pilot licensing and training simplification project.

Full details of the proposals can be found in [CAP 2974B](#) and associated decisions in our Consultation Response Document (CRD) [CAP 3032B](#). For more information on project background, please visit the [GA webpages](#).

Next steps

Note that changes are yet to be passed into legislation. We anticipate this taking place in Spring 2025; however, actual timelines are still to be confirmed with the Department for Transport.

In some areas, we need to develop appropriate Acceptable Means of Compliance (AMC), Guidance Material (GM) and other CAA publications (CAPs) to support the planned changes to regulation. These will be consulted on, where necessary, in late 2024 or early 2025.

The CAA will communicate implementation times and the details of any transitional arrangements as soon as they are known.

Due to resource constraints in the legislative programme, any changes to Theoretical knowledge procedures and validity periods for balloons will not be progressed until 2025, with implementation planned for 2026.

Further details of changes in these areas will be communicated in the future.

Chapter 1

Summary of changes

Balloon regulation implementation

- 1.1 We will continue with the implementation of Part-BFCL.
- 1.2 We will also be deeming valid the PPL(BA) issued under the Air Navigation Order (ANO) as valid under the Balloon Regulation, allowing holders to exercise privileges as Pilot-in-Command (PIC) of private ballooning operations only in Part-21 balloons up to hot-air group size A (envelope capacity up to 3,400m³).
- 1.3 We will discontinue the conversion and credit report for PPL(BA) holders and those seeking conversion will be credited using BFCL.035.
- 1.4 We will also maintain indefinitely existing PPL(BA)s issued under the ANO to exercise privileges as pilot-in-command of private ballooning operations only in non-Part 21 balloons.
- 1.5 Finally, we will cease issuing new PPL(BA)s and CPL(B)s from 30 September 2025, and will no longer accept applications for new PPL(BA) or CPL(B) licence issues.

Licensing for private ballooning

- 1.6 For PPL(BA) licence holders converting to the BPL by 30 September 2025, who can demonstrate logbook evidence of previously supervising PPL(BA) students, the CAA will, in accordance with the conversion and credit report, issue those BPL holders with a Flight Instructor for Balloons certificate (FI(B)) with restricted privileges and bearing the remark 'dual flight instruction for the initial issue of a BPL only'.
- 1.7 We will also alleviate the dual flight training requirements in BFCL.130 so that holders of an unrestricted and valid FI(B) certificate must supervise 4 hours of BPL dual flight training and the solo flight, while holders of a valid FI(B) certificate with restricted privileges may supervise the remainder.
- 1.8 We will change the requirement for flight and theoretical knowledge training to be conducted through an ATO or DTO making this optional, by allowing the flight and theoretical knowledge training for the issue of the BPL to be conducted by the holder of a valid FI(B).
- 1.9 We will delete the existing separate tethering rating in the BFCL regulations and instead embed the required training into the BPL training course.
- 1.10 We will mirror where possible the experience element of the former ANO PPL(BA) requirement, which is 5 flights each a minimum of 5 minutes' duration in the preceding 13 months.

- 1.11 We will be retaining the requirement in BFCL.160(a)(1)(ii) for a refresher training flight with an FI(B) every 48 months.
- 1.12 We will require all PPL(BA) holders to comply with the recency requirements in BFCL.160 except refresher training with effect from 30 September 2025.
- 1.13 There will then be a 5-year transitional arrangement so that the requirement for PPL(BA) holders to comply with all the requirements in BFCL.160 including refresher training will take effect from 30 September 2029.
- 1.14 Finally, we will require BPL pilots who have privileges in additional classes of balloons to have completed at least three flights or three hours of flight time, as PIC or flying dual or solo under the supervision of an FI(B), on each additional balloon class within the previous 24 months prior to the flight in those additional classes.

Commercial balloon licensing

- 1.15 We will split the current single commercial rating into two separate commercial ratings:
- a commercial non-passenger operation rating the holders of which can conduct commercial operations except those involving CPB, subject to fulfilling recency requirements; and
 - a commercial passenger operation rating the holders of which can conduct any type of commercial balloon operations including CPB, subject to fulfilling the recency requirements.
- 1.16 We will also introduce a new requirement to both the Commercial Non-Passenger Operation Rating and the new Commercial Passenger Operation Rating for this training course at an ATO or DTO, which shall include at least two flights with a FI(B) who holds the appropriate instructor privileges and a ground training course.
- 1.17 We will introduce a stepped minimum hours requirement for holders of the Commercial Passenger Operation Rating as follows:
- for commercial passenger ballooning in a hot air balloon group A or gas balloon or mixed balloon or hot air airship: 100 hours as PIC in balloons;
 - for commercial passenger ballooning in a hot-air balloon group B: 110 hours as PIC in balloons of which at least 10 hours commercial passenger ballooning flights in hot air balloons in group A;
 - for commercial passenger ballooning in a hot-air balloon group C: 200 hours as PIC in balloons of which at least 20 hours commercial passenger ballooning flights in hot air balloons in groups A and B combined, of which at least 10 hours in group B; and

- for commercial passenger ballooning in a hot-air balloon group D: 300 hours as PIC in balloons of which at least 30 hours commercial passenger ballooning flights in hot air balloons in groups A, B and C combined, of which at least 10 hours in group C.

1.18 We will make mandatory, for holders of the Commercial passenger operation rating, the proficiency check every 2 years. Those who have passed their commercial passenger operation skills test less than 2 years before must do their proficiency check within 13 months preceding the planned flight.

1.19 We will also make mandatory for holders of the Commercial passenger operation rating a ground refresher training course at an ATO or DTO every 5 years, including at least six hours of theoretical knowledge instruction.

Instructor and examiner requirements

1.20 We will introduce a requirement for instructors exercising privileges for commercial non-passenger or commercial passenger operations to undertake the training course at an ATO or DTO along the lines of what is currently required under BFCL.315(a)(3) for night rating or tethered flight rating, tailoring this by commercial non-passenger and commercial passenger operations.

1.21 We will also introduce a requirement for instructors exercising privileges for commercial passenger operations to have undertaken a minimum of 50 hours PIC of commercial passenger ballooning flights.

1.22 We will adjust the requirements for an instructor wishing to extend their privileges to instruct in additional classes, by changing the minimum requirements to be at least 15 flights and 30 hours of flight time (instead of 15 hours).

1.23 We will also adjust the overall balloon experience requirement for examiners wishing to exercise privileges in commercial non-passenger or CPB operations from 250 hours to 500 hours overall experience.

1.24 We will introduce a minimum number of hours experience as PIC of commercial non-passenger or CPB operations required of examiners wishing to exercise privileges in those operations:

- For commercial non-passenger operation privileges: at least 100 hours as PIC of commercial non-passenger ballooning or commercial passenger ballooning operations; and
- For commercial passenger operation privileges: at least 200 hours as PIC of commercial passenger ballooning operations.

1.25 We will also introduce a minimum number of hours experience as PIC of commercial non-passenger or CPB operations required of examiners wishing to exercise privileges in those operations:

- For commercial non-passenger operation privileges: at least 50 hours as PIC of commercial non-passenger ballooning or commercial passenger ballooning operations in the hot-air group size concerned (or on the group concerned and on larger groups combined); and
- For commercial passenger operation privileges: at least 100 hours as PIC of commercial passenger ballooning operations in the hot-air group size concerned (or on the group concerned and on larger groups combined).

1.26 We will introduce a minimum number of hours experience as PIC of commercial non-passenger or CPB operations required of examiners wishing to exercise privileges in those operations:

- For commercial non-passenger operation privileges: at least 50 hours as PIC of commercial non-passenger ballooning or commercial passenger ballooning operations in the hot-air group size concerned (or on the group concerned and on larger groups combined); and
- For commercial passenger operation privileges: at least 100 hours as PIC of commercial passenger ballooning operations in the hot-air group size concerned (or on the group concerned and on larger groups combined).

1.27 We will also make clearer in the regulations that Senior Examiners and CAA inspectors are the only individuals who conduct FE(B) assessments of competence, both for initial issue and revalidation/renewal of examiner certificates.

1.28 Finally, we will undertake further consultation with the community to develop the Guidance Material that clarifies the minimum experience for SE(B)s.