



HOW TO PASS YOUR FLIGHT ASSESSMENT

All drone pilots who want to operate commercially will need to complete a flight test as part of their Permission for Commercial Operations (Pfco). Here at OverEye, as qualified Pfco trainers and flight assessors, we know that no matter how experienced the pilot, this can be very daunting. Therefore, we have outlined a 'cheat sheet' process, from pilots and examiners, that will get you to a point where you have 75% in the bag before you even start flying. Go through this short checklist of questions to help you know what to expect, how to prepare and ultimately pass your flight assessment.

Are you ready for your flight assessment?

By the time you are ready for the flight assessment, you will have already completed ground school with a National Qualified Entity (NQE) and you should have been given all the tools and information necessary to succeed – all you must do is put the theory into practice.

The flight assessment is your opportunity to show the examiner that you are ready and proficient to go out and perform live jobs on your own as a professional operator. The assessment shouldn't be approached as 'something to get through', It should be used as a confidence boost and confirmation that you have the knowledge and ability to go out and perform, in a professional manner, in front of a paying client.

Do you understand your operations manual?

Your operations manual is your standard operating procedures, outlining what you will do operationally, how you will do it and what tools and equipment you will use to do it. This is what your examiner will check against and confirm that you are following it. In simple terms, if you understand your ops manual there should not be any surprises in your flight assessment!

To do this make, sure you have thoroughly read your ops manual, often this will have been created from a standard NQE template – but you should make this your own as much as possible so it makes sense and you don't just pay lip service to it. It should outline your processes and procedures and hold all

the answers to any questions the examiner may give you...it's a free pass!

Have you finalised your flight reference cards?

Part of your ops manual are your flight reference cards (FRCs), these again are a free pass. The FRCs act as your checklist and on the day will give you a step-by-step list of what to do when and in what order. Follow the list, complete the step, tick it off, rinse and repeat until you are ready to take-off – Airline pilots use them so why can't we?

Do you know your way round the drone app?

One common area people struggle with is knowing their way around the app. Often candidates know what they want to check, but they struggle to find it.

If you are using DJI GO 4 for example, I would suggest you spend some time getting to know it and having a look around – start with a broad look at the main screen, followed by the left hand drop down menu, along the top of the main screen and then down the right hand menu, making sure you check every tab. If you follow this process every time, you can't help but check everything, and after some practice you'll have this down to a fine art.

Have you said you are using a safety kit?

Very little to say other than, if your ops manual states you will use safety kit, then you will need to use safety kit during your test – this isn't something you should turn up and say "I'll get that when I pass!". There aren't any requirements on minimum kit requirements but ultimately you need to make sure the flight can be made safely.

Have you been practicing the right kind of flying?

Flying is often the part of the test where people spend most of their preparation time, and very little on their pre and onsite survey and safe setup, however, the flying part has the most variables, so you should make sure you have the pre-flight process locked in before you worry about the flying. Once you can do the paperwork and setup well, you can all but relax and just follow your procedures and flight reference cards until you fly. When you are practicing for your flight assessment, you should look to maximise your learning curve with deliberate practice.

So what does that mean? You should perform the manoeuvres that you may have been told ahead of time to perform such as the box, 45 degree ascent and decent, figure of eight and top hat etc, but keeping in mind the most important part of the practice is keeping discipline in accuracy and depth perception – flying around a field for 15 hours in sports mode is no better than 2 hours of deliberate practice.

For example, when you fly from point A to B and stop over a cone, it is important you don't allow yourself to rush through the manoeuvre. Even if you have to use your camera or step to the side to make sure you are accurately positioned, you should do it. This will train you eye and build confidence – after

all, when your being assessed it's only human to feel nervous and this will affect your flying, no matter how experienced you are!

It's also important to remember, the flight assessor is not there to catch you out. Their job is to make sure you can follow your process and you are a safe, proficient and controlled pilot, not that you don't make any mistakes or you're not mm accurate. Try to remember this and settle into the fun part of drones, the flying!

A note on ATTI mode (should you have it) – if you can perform the manoeuvres in ATTI, GPS will fall into place. This will really accelerate your learning curve and make GPS feel like a breeze. Talking of breezes, if you fly in different wind speeds, in a controlled environment that'll add a further level to your ability and comfort, always remembering you can always flick to GPS if you lose it!

The thing to remember about ATTI is it is all about anticipation, not reaction. Before you perform a manoeuvre, you should already have thought about 'if I do x, the wind will push me y, therefore I need to have input z'. GPS causes pilots to become reliant and reactional as it takes most the dimensions out of flying. Should you lose control in ATTI, don't panic, just calmly shift into GPS, compose yourself and start again, after all, it's all about safety and not how well you can push the envelope.



If you really want to accelerate things, I'd strongly recommend a micro drone that you can fly round your house. It will allow you to not only fly a non-GPS assisted drone, but also keep up your stick time indoors.

Do you know your emergency procedures?

A key priority for the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) is that flights are made safely and as such emergency procedures are a key component to your assessment. During your flight assessment, you will be requested to perform an array of

manoeuvres to avoid fictitious hazards and be given a maximum of two attempts to do this. In real life you could only have one and you'll need to react.

It's paramount that you know your emergency procedures off the top of your head and are able to enact them immediately in a controlled and calm manner. Again, repeat and deliberate practice is key here – refer to your operations manual and make sure you can react to such emergencies as air incursion, ground incursion, loss of control link and fly away etc.

Summary

In summary, 98% of the flight assessment can be practiced and refined before you show up, all you'll need to do is stay calm and react to any subtleties in the environment on the day. Get to know and use your ops manual and FRCs to practice your setup and get plenty of time in deliberate practice in ATTI and you'll give yourself the best chance possible.

How can OverEye support you through this process?

Here at OverEye, our aim is to support you to harness the power of drones. To ensure you are best prepared for your flight assessment and transition into commercial operations we can provide the following services tailored to you and your business' needs:

- Hone your flying skills with flight coaching sessions with our expert pilots and qualified assessors.
- Learn how to optimise drones and drone data for your business with our sector specific business consultancy and training workshops.
- Build your company's resilience for an ever evolving future with our drone business strategy advisors.

OverEye can help you to use drones to enable innovation, costs savings, increased safety and ultimately growth within your business. For more information, and no obligation quotations, on how to embrace the endless possibilities drone technology can bring, visit OverEye.co.uk or email info@overeye.co.uk.



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