What's New and Upcoming in Airman Testing

(revised October 2017)

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Date of Next Airman Knowledge Test Roll: February 12, 2018

ACS Implementation

- The FAA, in collaboration with the ARAC ACS AMT WG, has developed a draft AMT ACS. The estimated publication date for the final AMT ACS, FAA-S-ACS-1, is June 2020.

- Please review the ACS material published on this page, and subscribe for updates and information about deployment of additional ACS documents.

- You may also wish to take the "Understanding the Airman Certification Standards" course (ALC-449) on www.faasafety.gov. This course offers WINGS credit.

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Knowledge Test Development and Management

- The FAA does not publish actual knowledge test questions, nor can we respond to queries about specific questions that may or may not be on the test.

- We make every effort to maintain the integrity and security of actual knowledge test questions through regular review and revision of the test question item bank.
    - Starting with the airplane knowledge test banks for the private pilot, commercial pilot and airline transport pilot certificates and the instrument rating, we have intensified this review and revision process.
        - The formal review ("boarding") process includes ensuring that active questions are aligned with knowledge, skill, or risk management elements defined in the appropriate Airman Certification Standards (ACS) document.
        - All active knowledge test questions for the Private Pilot Airplane (PAR), Commercial Pilot Airplane (CAX) and Instrument-Airplane Rating (IRA) knowledge tests have been aligned with the corresponding ACS.
        - All active knowledge test questions for the AMT knowledge tests will be aligned with the corresponding AMT ACS by the planned June 2020, publication date.
    - As this level of review continues and moves to additional knowledge test banks, it is increasingly unlikely that applicants will see an exact match between sample questions and actual test questions.
    - Validation questions may be included on any of the FAA's active knowledge tests. Answers to these questions do not count toward the applicant's final score.

- The FAA provides sample knowledge tests and the information on this page to help applicants, instructors, evaluators, and training providers understand the scope and type of knowledge that will be tested to qualify for the target certificate or rating. The goal is for applicants to devote their efforts to mastering the fundamental aeronautical knowledge necessary for safe operations in the National Airspace System (NAS) rather than to memorizing specific questions and answers.

- The questions that you may have seen and studied in commercially-available materials have been developed by test preparation providers for similar reasons – that is, to enable applicants to study concepts and practice calculations specified in the 14 CFR part 61 "aeronautical knowledge" requirements for each airman certificate or rating. These are not, and should not be represented to be, "real" questions.

- Finally, please bear in mind that while certain topics are deleted from the knowledge test, they may still be relevant to small areas of the country. Though it is not appropriate to include such items on a general, national-level knowledge test, the exclusion of these topics does not diminish the importance of mastering subjects specific to your normal operating area.

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Airman Knowledge Test Supplements (AKTS) (CT-8080 series)

- The FAA has undertaken a comprehensive review of testing supplements in the CT-8080 series. This review will ultimately result in various changes, to include addition, deletion, and revision of figures in the test supplements.

- Please be aware, however, that most resources have been directed to the ongoing intensive review and revision of knowledge test questions. For this reason, CT-8080 supplements may continue to include "obsolete" figures (e.g., NDB- or ADF-related figures) that are no longer associated with active test questions.

- There are no changes to the existing version of the AMT AKTS (FAA-CT-8080-4F, 2013) or Addendum A (August 2014). The estimated publication date for the next revision of the AMT AKTS (FAA-CT-8080-4G) is June 2019.

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Handbooks (H-series)

- With the assistance of aviation community members of the ARAC (Aviation Rulemaking Advisory Committee) Airman Certification Standards Working Group, the FAA is reviewing and revising a number of its H-series handbooks.

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To review the planned publication and revisions dates for these and other documents produced by the FAA's Airman Testing Standards Branch (AFS-630), please click here.
The estimated publication dates for the AMT Handbooks are as follows:

- AMG HB (FAA-H-8080-30A): October 2017

- AMA HB (FAA-H-8083-31A): September 2018

- AMP HB (FAA-H-8083-32A): September 2018

FAA Knowledge Test Changes

The next cycle roll date is February 12, 2018.

Changes Applicable to Operations and AMT Knowledge Test Banks

- Wherever it is appropriate to do so, the FAA is replacing rote questions with test questions framed in the context of a specific Area of Operation/Task.

- The FAA expects to develop test questions on the new BasicMed regulation in the future. Third-class medical questions will remain, since BasicMed is an addition to the medical certification structure, not a replacement of the third-class medical.

- While certain topics have been deleted from the knowledge test, they may still be relevant to small areas of the country. Though it is not appropriate to include such items on a general, national-level knowledge test, the exclusion of these topics does not diminish the importance of mastering subjects specific to your normal operating area, both for the practical test and for normal operations.

- The FAA is currently aligning AMG knowledge test questions to the draft AMT ACS.

- While there have been no substantial changes to the AMA and AMP knowledge test banks since February 2017, the FAA continues to review and revise test questions as needed. All Knowledge, Risk Management, and Skill Elements for the AMA Aircraft Finishes and Welding Subjects have been deleted or incorporated into other areas of the draft AMT ACS, but these changes are not reflected in knowledge test questions for the October 12, 2017 cycle roll.

- References to the Airport/Facility Directory (A/FD) have been changed to this publication's new name, "Chart Supplement."

- U.S. format Flight Plans - New questions based on the new U.S. flight plan will be developed and implemented by **June 2018.**

- Student Pilot/Medical Certificate - New questions based on the Student Pilot Certificate rule that took effect on 1 April 2016 are being developed. We expect to add these questions to appropriate knowledge tests by **October 16, 2017.**

- Rote memorization questions such as the following have been removed (e.g., Validity period for unscheduled products such as SIGMETS).

- Operationally irrelevant questions have been removed (e.g., Meaning of brackets near station model on a WX depiction chart).

- The following topics have been removed from FAA Knowledge Tests (effective June 12, 2017):
  - 4-panel prog charts
  - Weather depiction chart
  - Area forecasts
  - Aerobatic flight

- AMT only – the following topic(s) have been removed from the AMT question banks:
  o Rotax

- The following topics were removed from FAA Knowledge Tests during prior test cycle rolls:
  o Tricolor VASI
  o Remote Airport Advisory (RAA)
  o Local Airport Advisory (LAA)
  o Blowing Sand
  o WAC charts
  o Special Flight Rules Area
  o Mach Meter
  o ADF/NDB, RMI
  o Slaved Gyro
  o Radar Summary Charts
  o EFAS
  o Medevac
  o TWEB
  o Obsolete fuel grades (80, 100 and 115)
  o Timed approaches from holding
  o Flight service stations "on the field"
  o VHF/DF Steer
  o MLS, INS
  o Composite Moisture Stability Chart (replaced with Lifted Index chart)
  o LORAN

Changes Applicable to the Private Pilot Airplane (PAR) Knowledge Test

- Aircraft performance and weather questions that involve multiple interpolations across multiple charts do not include multiple interpolations across multiple charts.

Changes Applicable to the Instrument Rating Airplane (IRA) Knowledge Test

- The following subjects have been removed:
  o Airport Surveillance Radar (ASR) approaches
  o Composite Flight Plans
  o Designation of instruments as "primary" or "secondary" for aircraft control
  o Inner Marker, Middle Marker
  o Specific number of degrees on glide path
  o Time and distance questions involving multiple interpolation
  o BARO VNAV (IRA ONLY)
  o Back Course Approaches (IRA ONLY)
  o LDA & SDF (IRA ONLY)
  o Aircraft performance and weather questions that involve multiple interpolations across multiple charts

Changes Applicable to the Airline Transport Pilot Multiengine (ATM)and Aircraft Dispatcher (ADX) Knowledge Tests

- The following subjects have been removed:
  - Dutch roll
  - Questions on tail plane icing

- Questions include only the following aircraft types:
  - BE 1900D,
  - Boeing 737,
  - Canadair Regional Jet ,
  - Bombardier Q400, DC-9

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Sample Knowledge Tests for Private Pilot Airplane (PAR) Airman, Instrument Rating Airplane (IRA), and Commercial Pilot Airplane (CAX) Knowledge Tests

The FAA sample questions for the Private Pilot Airplane (PAR), the Instrument Rating Airplane, and the Commercial Pilot Airplane (CAX) Airman Knowledge Tests now show two types of codes associated with each question:

- Learning Statement Code(s) (LSCs) associated with the question topic area. The LSC codes currently appear on the Airman Knowledge Test Report for missed test questions.

- "Airman Certification Standards" (ACS) code for the question topic area. The FAA expects the ACS codes to replace the LSC codes on these Airman Knowledge Tests once a new test management services contract is in place.

The FAA is assigning ACS codes to Private Pilot Airplane, Instrument Rating Airplane, and Commercial Pilot Airplane sample knowledge test questions in order to illustrate how these codes will be applied to actual test questions after the ACS is implemented for that test bank. The FAA's ACS Exam Review Board (AEB) seeks to code each question in accordance with the following guidelines:

1. The ACS code should align with the most appropriate Area of Operation, Task, and Task Element, to include phase of flight. For example:

   a. The ACS code assigned to a question framed as "while flying" would not be in the Areas of Operation pertaining to Preflight Preparation or Preflight Procedures.

   b. The ACS code assigned to an Instrument Rating Airplane question framed as "while making an approach" will align with the appropriate IAP Task.

   c. A question that has words such as "determine," "calculate," or "identify" in the stem is most likely to be coded with an "S" (Skill) ACS code.

2. The ACS code is assigned according to how the question stem is constructed, not the answer or distractors. For example, a question that has words such as "determine," "calculate," or "identify" in the stem is most likely to be coded with an "S" (Skill) ACS code.

The FAA continues to refine its approach to assignment of ACS codes. If you have questions about why the FAA chose to assign a particular code or if you believe another code is more appropriate, please contact AFS-630 or email the ACS Focus Team (9-AVS-ACS-Focus-Team@faa.gov).

- For basic information on the ACS, please click here.

- To learn about the ACS codes, please click here.

- For a detailed presentation on the ACS, please click here.

- To review FAQs on the ACS, please click here.

There have been no changes to the AMT sample knowledge tests since the last cycle roll.

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Airman Certification Standards

Since September 2011, the FAA has worked closely with a diverse group of aviation community stakeholders convened to help the agency improve the testing/training standards, guidance and test development/test management components of the airman certification process.

The industry participants in this effort have developed the Airman Certification Standards (ACS) framework as a way to improve airman training and testing, specifically by providing an integrated, holistic system that clearly aligns airman testing with certification standards and guidance.

Built on the existing Practical Test Standards (PTS), which explicitly define the performance metrics and tolerances for each flight proficiency element listed in 14 CFR, the ACS enhances the PTS by defining the specific elements, aeronautical knowledge, and risk management needed to support each Area of Operation/Task. In simple terms, the ACS describes what an applicant must *know*, *do*, and *consider* to pass the knowledge and practical tests for a given airman certificate or rating. It is thus the single-source set of standards for both the knowledge test and the practical test for a certificate or rating.

By presenting the elements of knowledge, skill, and risk management in the integrated ACS format, the ACS approach better serves the applicant, the instructor, and the evaluator. In addition, the ACS approach enables the FAA to create and maintain a clear link among the regulations, knowledge/skill performance standards, guidance, and test materials.

The FAA replaced the PTS for the Private Pilot Airplane certificate and the Instrument-Airplane rating with the corresponding ACS on June 15, 2016. The agency published revised versions of the ACS for the Private Pilot Airplane certificate and the Instrument-Airplane rating in June 2017, along with the first version of the ACS for the Commercial Pilot Airplane certificate to replace the corresponding PTS.

For detailed background information on the process use to develop the ACS, please see the ARAC Airman Testing Standards and Training Working Group's report at http://www.faa.gov/regulations_policies/rulemaking/committees/documents/media/Airmen.Testing.Standards.Recommendation.Report.9.30.2013.PDF

For detailed information on the ACS, please click here. [back]

Airman Certification Standards (ACS) Codes

One of the overarching goals of the ACS effort is to create an integrated, coherent airman certification system in which standards, guidance, and testing can be aligned and maintained in alignment. Such symmetry is key to fully realizing the benefits the ACS system promises to both the FAA and its many stakeholders. It is also key to conformance with accepted industry standards for certification programs, which require that items to be trained and tested be directly linked to the job/task analysis – in this case, the ACS.

To help achieve this goal, the aviation community experts who developed the ACS developed a coding system intended for use in both Airman Knowledge Tests and Practical Test tasks. These codes provide the means to correlate the tasks in the ACS with guidance and testing, and to keep them aligned going forward.

The ACS coding system has four elements that are anchored in the ACS (not in reference documents, like the current LSCs).

PA.IV.B.K1:
   PA = Applicable ACS (Private Pilot - Airplane)
   IV = Area of Operation (Takeoffs, Landings, and Go-Arounds)
   B = Task (Normal Approach and Landing);
   K1 = Task element Knowledge 1 (A stabilized approach, to include energy management concepts) [knowledge (K), risk management (R), skill (S)]

For the practical test, the IACRA tables were revised on June 12, 2017 to align with the ACS for Private Pilot Airplane certificate (PAR), Instrument Airplane rating (IRA) and the Commercial Airplane Pilot (CAX). Evaluators should use the IACRA "remarks" section to record deficient ACS Task Elements on the Notice of Disapproval.

The current knowledge test management system does not have the capability to print ACS codes on the Airman Knowledge Test Report (AKTR). Until a new test management system is in place, the current Learning Statement Codes (e.g., "PLT" codes will continue to be displayed on the AKTR. The PLT codes are linked to references leading to broad subject areas. By contrast, each ACS code is tied to a unique Task Element in the ACS itself. Because of this fundamental difference, there is no one-to-one correlation between LSC codes and ACS codes.

Because all active knowledge test questions for the private pilot airplane (PAR), instrument-airplane rating (IRA), and the commercial pilot airplane(CAX) knowledge tests have been aligned with the corresponding ACS, evaluators can use LSC codes in conjunction with the ACS to for more targeted retesting of missed knowledge. The evaluator should look up the LSC code(s) on the applicant's AKTR in the Learning Statement Reference Guide. After noting the subject area(s), the evaluator can use the corresponding AOO/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).   [back]