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ELPAC

English Language Proficiency for Aeronautical Communication

ELPAC Pilot - Test taker preparation

ELPAC is developed in cooperation with:

ENOVATE

ENOVATE is responsible for the technical infrastructure to host and operate the ELPAC test including the provision of technical support to users on request.

Zurich University
of Applied Sciences



ZHAW is responsible for the English language and linguistic aspects of the ELPAC test including the evaluation of ELPAC test items, test format and the ELPAC examiner training.

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1. General information about ELPAC Pilot

The ELPAC Pilot test was developed by EUROCONTROL to meet ICAO and European Commission requirements for ATPL pilots to demonstrate their proficiency in the English language in aeronautical communications with air traffic controllers.

ELPAC Pilot is designed for ATPL pilots and reflects the range of communication tasks undertaken in the cockpit. The focus of the test is on language proficiency and not on operational procedures. The ELPAC Pilot test assesses language proficiency at ICAO levels 4 and 5. The ELPAC Pilot test comprises two test papers:

- Paper 1 Listening Comprehension
- Paper 2 Oral Interaction

Paper 1 Listening Comprehension tests understanding communications between pilots and controllers in both routine and non-routine situations. The recordings are based on authentic material and range from short standard pilot/controller transmissions to longer communications in which pilots deal with non-routine or unexpected situations with controllers and other pilots. This test lasts approximately 41 minutes.

A sample version of Paper 1 is available for familiarisation on: www.elpac.info.

Paper 2 Oral Interaction with visual tasks requires you to demonstrate in task 1:

- making a verbal report in plain English
- describing a developing unusual situation
- dealing effectively with the relationship between pilot and supervisor
- resolving misunderstandings
- negotiating meaning
- producing extended speech in an aviation context
- appropriate use of aviation related language and vocabulary

and, in task 2 be able to:

- give opinions
- put forward arguments
- evaluate (advantages & disadvantages)
- speculate
- hypothesise
- produce extended speech in an aviation context.

This part of the test lasts approximately 20 minutes and provides a context appropriate to your experience as an ATPL pilot.

To achieve a licence endorsement it is necessary to obtain a pass in both Paper 1 and Paper 2. There is no accumulative score. The lowest level achieved, in either Paper 1 or Paper 2, is the final assessment.

2. ELPAC Pilot test – Paper 1

ELPAC Paper 1 has five parts, designed to test a range of different listening skills. As each part appears on the screen, you will read and hear instructions on how to answer the questions. This is done by clicking on boxes in a table or by typing a few words in the spaces provided.

You will not lose marks for spelling mistakes.

The full instructions will disappear once the test part starts but simplified instructions will remain on the screen. At the beginning of each part there is an example. The example will illustrate the type of test questions in the respective test part. The example items will be answered by the computer - **DO NOT** try to answer these items.

There is a limited amount of time to answer each test item. When the time for each item is over, the next item, highlighted by a blue frame, will start automatically. **You should align the cursor with the blue frame in which you have to type your answers.** Answer each question as you hear the information. Do not wait until the end of the audio file before answering. This is not a memory test. Once a test part is completed, you cannot go back to it. However, within the time available for each part you can correct or change your answers if you wish to.

The test is time-driven so that once it starts you must complete each item as it is presented to you. When part 5 is finished you will hear “That is the end of the test”.

Note: Sometimes, at the end of the test, you will be encouraged to complete a short additional section. This is how new items will be trialled. It will take a maximum of 5 minutes.

3. Description of the structure of Paper 1 (5 parts, 52 items)

Part 1 - SAQ – list: You enter your answers in alphanumeric format (sometimes a short word will be required). Testing recognition. Items for this part will be presented on one screen.

Part 2 - MCQ – table (readback evaluation): This part tests careful listening for accuracy of readback. There will be one or two correct answers (out of three options). The maximum number of checkmarks (√) in the table will not be specified. Items for this part will be presented on one screen.

Note: Pilot readback of frequencies often omit the “decimal” e.g. 135560 instead of 135.560. This is not considered a fault as long as all the numbers are correct.

Part 3 - SAQ: This part tests your comprehension of communications between a pilot and a controller in unusual and non-routine situations. There are four audio files (one for the example items and the remaining three for the test items). Each communication has three questions and these will be presented on a separate screen.

Part 4 - SAQ – ATIS: This part tests your listening for specific information in ATIS messages. There are six audio files (one for the example item and the remaining five for the test items). Each communication has three questions. The first two questions are in alphanumeric format. The third question may require a short sentence or phrase. The questions for this part will be presented on a separate screen.

Part 5: - SAQ: This part tests your comprehension of radio communications between pilots and controllers dealing with unusual and non-routine situations. These are longer and more complex transmissions than found in part 3. There will be six audio files (one for the example item and the remaining five for the test items). Each communication has five questions and these will be presented on a separate screen.

Note :SAQ: short answer question, MCQ: multiple choice question

4. Tips for ELPAC Pilot Paper 1 test-takers

Make sure that you become familiar with the instructions for each part of Paper 1 and the type of answer you are expected to give.

Read carefully the questions (items), particularly for parts 3 and 5 (SAQ).

Note: especially if the question begins with “Who? What? Why? Where? When? and How?” and respond appropriately.

This is a listening test – so, listen carefully. Do not assume that the pilot or controller will do something because “that’s the obvious thing to do”.

The questions are deliberately spaced to give you time to type the response before you hear the next piece of relevant information for the next question.

Do not listen to the complete transmission before starting to answer the questions – this is not a memory test! Type the answer as you hear the required information which is presented in a logical sequence.

The Short Answer Questions (SAQs) do not require you to type more than a few words or a short phrase. But you will need to be precise and accurate in your answer to show that you correctly understood the question.

It is strongly recommended that in order to become familiar with the layout and questions of paper 1, go to www.elpac.info and do the test version at least once, if not a couple of times before taking the ELPAC test.

5. ELPAC test – Paper 2

Paper 2 (Oral interaction) is divided into two tasks (task 1 and task 2) and involves visual (face to face) communication. Paper 2 is designed to assess your performance of plain English in an aeronautical communication.

Paper 2 requires you to demonstrate in task 1:

- making a verbal report in plain English
- describing a developing unusual situation
- dealing effectively with the relationship between pilot and supervisor
- resolving misunderstandings
- negotiating meaning
- producing extended speech in an aviation context
- appropriate use of aviation related language and vocabulary

and, in task 2 be able to:

- give opinions
- put forward arguments
- evaluate (advantages & disadvantages)
- speculate
- hypothesise

- produce extended speech in an aviation context.

Paper 2 lasts approximately 20 minutes and provides a context appropriate to your operational experience as an ATPL pilot.

6. Description of the structure of Paper 2 (2 tasks)

Task 1 (3 - 4 minutes)

In this task you will hear a recording of communications between pilots and a controller. This is a visual (face-to-face) communication in which you give a verbal report on the events in the recording to the interlocutor now playing the role of your supervisor. You can take notes during the recording, and you may be asked to clarify some points in your report.

Task 2 (8 - 10 minutes)

This is a visual communication with an interlocutor in which discussion is first based on an aviation photograph and then moves to aviation issues in a broader context.

7. Tips for ELPAC Pilot Paper 2 test-takers

In task 1 listen carefully to the pilot and controller messages in the recording and take notes as you see fit. Make a complete and accurate report about the unusual situation. The interlocutor may ask for clarification.

In task 2 – answer all questions as fully as possible! You will not be assessed on what you think but on how well you can express yourself in English.

It is important that you relax and speak as confidently as you can. It is your responsibility as the candidate to participate in the conversation to the best of your ability.

You can only be assessed on what you say. If you do not say very much then you risk being assessed at a level below your true proficiency - because you did not demonstrate the level of language you are normally capable of producing.

Remember, ELPAC is a high-stakes test. The security of the test is paramount. In your own interest avoid discussing the test items and tasks with colleagues.

You are not allowed to bring into the examination room mobile phones, sound recording devices and similar electronic equipment or to take notes about the content of the test. Do not talk with anybody in the room except the examiner(s).

8. Proving your identity

Before presenting yourself for the ELPAC Pilot test (Paper 1 and Paper 2) ensure that you have a valid ID with you. You will be asked for proof of identity before being allowed to take the ELPAC Pilot test.