

# In English, please



## The FCL 1.028 is dead, Long live the **FCL.055!** A USER'S GUIDE

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The FCL.055 is an essential element for pilots who wish to bring some international flavor to their flights. It is a compulsory step both for commercial pilots who want to add an instrument rating (IR) to their license and more generally for pilots who are looking forward to flying abroad. The former must prove their ability to use the English language by taking the FCL.055 (d). The latter are requested to have a language proficiency endorsement on their license and for that are evaluated via the FCL.055 either IFR or VFR. (1)

### Where to start?

As often nowadays, the Quest for the Grail begins on line. A visit to the Department of Transportation's internet site at [www.developpement-durable.gouv.fr/inscriptions-aux-contrôles-de.html](http://www.developpement-durable.gouv.fr/inscriptions-aux-contrôles-de.html) provides all the information needed, including a presentation of the exams (FCL.055(d), FCL.055 IFR, FCL.055VFR), dates, places for the different sessions, and some samples of the various tests. There is also a direct link to the Oceane portal, the French civil aviation site dedicated to exams, where candidates must create a personal account to be able to register, pay the fee, and later print the document needed to update their license. No notification letter or results sheet is sent by snail mail. The internet is the only connection between the candidates and the organization for all administrative matters.

### What can you expect?

On D-Day, candidates only need to bring an ID and a pen. Scratch paper and answer sheets are provided at the beginning of the exam and will be retrieved at the end. The exam room is divided into several booths, each equipped with a headset and a black box fitted with a push-to-talk button. Once the paperwork has been taken care of

and everybody has settled down, the examiners, usually 2, briefly remind the candidates what the exam is about and how it is going to unfold. Both FCL.055, IFR and VFR, are built on the same pattern with three tests: fictional flight, emergency situation and live traffic comprehension. The difference between the IFR and the VFR exams lies mainly in the complexity of the situations and in the case of the live traffic test, in the number of recordings.

### Fictional flight

Each candidate is given a scenario and has 5 minutes to study it. After a thorough radio check, the examiners, acting as air traffic controllers, begin role playing alternatively with the candidates, acting as pilots. The first exchanges are in a set order, but after that, everybody is free to step in at will. The pilots must read back all messages to show that they have understood and, as in real life, they must be careful not to step on somebody else's communication. Scenarios cover miscellaneous situations such as weather deterioration, SIGMET, traffic information, ATIS, airport closed at destination, refueling, holding pattern description, and so on.

### Emergency or unusual situation

There is a slight difference between the VFR and IFR versions in this test. VFR pilots pick a card where the unusual situation is described in French, they have 30 seconds to read it and then relate their trouble in English to the examiner. IFR pilots also pick a card where an emergency situation is written in French, and they also have 30 seconds to read it, but they have to explain their problem to another pilot who must show in turn that he has understood the situation by reading back. The examiners listen to the exchange bet-

ween both pilots and may ask questions if they require clarification. The topics here also cover all sorts of emergency situations, such as fuel leakage, refueling, landing gear or navigation problems, etc.

### Listening comprehension

During the live traffic test, candidates listen to a number of messages (9 pilot/controller messages and 1 ATIS recording for the FCL.055 VFR, 18 and 1 respectively for the FCL.055 IFR) and fill in the blanks on an answer sheet. Each message is played twice with a 3 second pause before repetition and a 10 second pause between 2 different messages. This test is probably the most challenging. One message can be pretty difficult to understand, while the next one will be very clear. A word of advice: if after the second hearing, you still haven't caught what has been said, just forget about it, and concentrate on the next message or you might end up completely lost.

### Results

When all three tests are completed, candidates are asked to leave the room and wait outside while the two examiners cross-check their notes on the fictional flight and the emergency situation. Both examiners also grade the live traffic test. Then candidates are given their results and feedback individually, and are reminded of the renewal date. If an IFR candidate is detected as a potential level 6, he is encouraged to sit for the exam in Paris, the only center accredited to deliver the higher ICAO level.

The FCL.055 is a very specific exam that must be prepared... specifically, by doing pair work and listening comprehension exercises. Practice is the key. It is said to make perfect. It definitely improves the odds of success.

## Vocabulary

CHALLENGING : Difficile - THE FORMER, ... THE LATTER : Le premier, ... le dernier - FORMERLY : Avant - THE ODDS : Les chances - TO REMIND ≠ TO REMEMBER : Rappeler ≠ se souvenir - SCRATCH PAPER : Papier brouillon - SNAIL MAIL ≠ E-MAIL : Courriel ≠ courrier - TO STEP IN : Intervenir - TO STEP ON : Interférer - THOROUGH : Complet.

(1) More on the FCL.055, formerly known as FCL 1.200 and FCL 1.028, in *Info-Pilote* n°660 "FCL 1.028, Don't leave France without it" and *Info-Pilote* n°684 "Language proficiency requirements, a few chances"