

Supplementary Instruction

CAP 797 FISO Manual

Safety and Airspace Regulation Group

Airspace, ATM and Aerodromes



Number 2020/08 (Issue 1)

Issued: 18 December 2020

Effective Date: 20 May 2021

CAP 797 Flight Information Service Officer Manual – Change to VMC minima

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of this Supplementary Instruction (SI) is to detail changes made to the Flight Information Service Officer (FISO) Manual (CAP 797), relating to the implementation of amended VMC minima in UK airspace.

2 Background

- 2.1 Through the Aviation Safety (Amendment) Regulations 2021, the Department for Transport (DfT) intends to amend SERA.5001¹ Table S5-1 VMC visibility and distance from cloud minima with effect from 20 May 2021. This amendment affects the VMC minima in airspace classes D, F and G.
- 2.2 The VMC minima in class D airspace at and below 3,000 ft AMSL or 1,000 ft above terrain, whichever is the higher, will continue to require flights to operate with a flight visibility of 5 km and a distance from cloud of at least 1,500 m horizontally and at least 1,000 ft vertically. However, aircraft will also be deemed to have complied with these requirements if they are flying:
- (a) during day only;
 - (b) indicated airspeed of 140 kts or less;
 - (c) remaining clear of cloud with the surface in sight and;
 - (i) for aircraft other than helicopters, with a flight visibility of at least 5 km;
 - (ii) for helicopters, with a flight visibility of at least 1,500 m.
- 2.3 The VMC minima in airspace classes F and G at and below 3,000 ft AMSL or 1,000 ft above terrain, whichever is the higher, will continue to require flights to operate with a flight visibility of at least 5 km, clear of cloud and with the surface in sight. However, aircraft will also be deemed to have complied with these requirements if they are flying:
- (a) during day only;

¹ In accordance with the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018, references to EU regulations are now references to the UK law of the same name. That is, Retained EU Law as amended by UK law.

- (b) indicated airspeed of 140 kts or less;
- (c) for all aircraft, with a flight visibility reduced to not less than 1,500 m.

2.4 It is worth noting that the amendment to SERA.5001 Table S5-1 relating to airspace classes F and G will not change the operating environment, as these minima are currently enabled through [Official Record Series\(ORS\) 4 No 1341](#).

2.5 Whilst we have confirmation from the DfT of the effective date of the change in legislation, the Aviation Safety (Amendment) Regulations 2021 will not be laid in Parliament until 7 January 2021 and remain subject to Parliamentary process. As such, the amendment may not pass into law, or may be subject to further amendment; albeit the CAA considers both these possibilities unlikely. Irrespective, the CAA has decided to publish this SI ahead of the laying in Parliament in order to ensure that ANSPs have the maximum time available to undertake their implementation activities and, specifically, the safety assessment of the change to the functional system in accordance with ATS.OR.205.

2.6 When assessing the impact of this change, ATS units are reminded to consider the following:

- Letters of agreement and memoranda of understanding with adjacent aerodromes and aircraft operators;
- Entries in AIP AD2 that may refer (directly or indirectly) to SERA.5001 Table S5-1 the VMC visibility and distance from cloud minima;
- The development and subsequent implementation of amendments to unit instructions, training plans, (and, where appropriate) conversion courses and competence schemes and (where appropriate) to have these approved by the CAA; and,
- Gaining sufficient assurance that all ATS staffs are competent to provide ATS in the changed environment, given the challenges of managing competence whilst staff may be on furlough.

3 Amendment to CAP 797

3.1 With effect from 20 May 2021, CAP 797 is amended as shown at [Annex A](#). This change will be incorporated into CAP 797 at the next amendment in due course.

4 Queries

4.1 Any queries or further guidance required on the content of this SI should be addressed to:

ATS Enquiries
Airspace, ATM & Aerodromes
Civil Aviation Authority
Safety and Airspace Regulation Group
Beehive Ring road
Crawley
West Sussex
RH6 0YR
E-mail: ats.enquiries@caa.co.uk

4.2 Any queries relating to the availability of this SI should be addressed to:

ATS Documents
Safety & Business Delivery
Civil Aviation Authority
Safety and Airspace Regulation Group
Beehive Ring road
Crawley
West Sussex
RH6 0YR
E-mail: ats.documents@caa.co.uk

5 Cancellation

5.1 This SI shall remain in force until incorporated into CAP 797 or it is cancelled, suspended or amended.

Annex A

Visual Flight Rules (VFR)

4.5 The pilot of an aircraft is responsible for determining whether or not the meteorological conditions permit flight in accordance with the VFR. The criteria for determining Visual Meteorological Conditions are summarised in the tables below (SERA.5001 Table S5-1).

By day	Distance from cloud		Flight visibility
	Horizontal	Vertical	
At and above FL 100			
Class B, C, D, E, F and G airspace	1 500 m	1 000 ft	8 km
Below FL100 and above 3 000 ft AMSL, or above 1 000 ft above terrain, whichever is the higher			
Class B, C, D, E, F and G airspace	1 500m	1 000 ft	5 km
At and below 3 000 ft AMSL, or 1 000 ft above terrain, whichever is the higher			
Class B, C, D and E airspace	1 500m	1 000 ft	5 km
Class <u>F</u> and <u>G</u> airspace	Clear of cloud and with the surface in sight		5 km

Alternatively, by day only, at and below 3 000 ft AMSL <u>or 1 000 ft above terrain, whichever is the higher</u>, flying at 140 kts IAS or less to give adequate opportunity to observe other traffic or any obstacles in time to avoid collision		
Aircraft other than helicopters		
<u>Class D airspace</u>	Clear of cloud and with the surface in sight	5 km
<u>Class G airspace</u>	Clear of cloud and with the surface in sight	1 500 m
For helicopters		
<u>Class D airspace</u>	Clear of cloud and with the surface in sight	1 500 m
<u>Class G airspace</u>	Clear of cloud and with the surface in sight	1 500 m

By night	Distance from cloud		Flight visibility
	Horizontal	Vertical	
At and above FL100			
Class B, C, D, E, F and G airspace	1 500 m	1 000 ft	8 km
Below FL100 and above 3 000 ft AMSL, or above 1 000 ft above terrain, whichever is the higher			
Class B, C, D, E, F and G airspace	1 500 m	1 000 ft	5 km
At and below 3 000 ft AMSL, or 1 000 ft above terrain, whichever is the higher			
Class B, C, D, E airspace	1 500 m	1 000 ft	5 km
	Maintain continuous sight of the surface		
Class F and G airspace	Clear of cloud and maintain continuous sight of the surface		5 km

Note 1. The VMC criteria stated in the table above for flight by day in class D, F and G airspace at or below 3 000 ft AMSL or 1000 ft above terrain, whichever is higher, reflect changes from SERA.5001 Table S5-1, as enabled through the Aviation Safety (Amendment) Regulations 2021.

Note 2. For VFR flight at night, the VMC criteria specified in the table above shall apply except that the ceiling shall not be less than 1 500 ft (SERA.5005(c)(3)(i)).

Note 3. Except where Note 4 applies, for fixed-wing and helicopter flights wishing to operate under VFR to or from an aerodrome, or enter the aerodrome traffic zone, or aerodrome traffic circuit in class D airspace the ground visibility at the aerodrome shall be used.

Note 4. The UK CAA has issued exemptions within the Official Record Series (ORS) 4 – Miscellaneous, which permit the operator and commander of a helicopter registered in the UK and conducting Police, HEMS or Search and Rescue (SAR) flights, including SAR training flights operating in accordance with a Letter of Agreement with the ATS provider, to operate with cloud ceiling, visibility and distance from cloud lower than those specified above, to the extent necessary to achieve the purpose of the flight and in circumstances that render such departure necessary in the interests of safety.

Note 5. The UK CAA has issued exemptions within the ORS4 – Miscellaneous that exempts the operator and pilot in command of a helicopter conducting pipeline, powerline or rail track inspection flights in support of the maintenance of the national infrastructure from complying with SERA.5005(b) subject to specific conditions.