



Issued: 5 May 2017

Small Unmanned Aircraft - National Qualified Entities

This Information Notice contains information that is for guidance and/or awareness.

Recipients are asked to ensure that this Information Notice is copied to all members of their staff who may have an interest in the information (including any 'in-house' or contracted maintenance organisations and relevant outside contractors).

Applicability:	
Aerodromes:	Not primarily affected
Air Traffic:	Not primarily affected
Airspace:	Not primarily affected
Airworthiness:	Not primarily affected
Flight Operations:	All Small Unmanned Aircraft National Qualified Entities
Licensed/Unlicensed Personnel:	All Small Unmanned Aircraft National Qualified Entities and any personnel associated with small unmanned aircraft activities.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 National Qualified Entities (NQEs), as detailed in CAP 722 Appendix E (www.CAA.co.uk/CAP722), are CAA approved organisations that are established to assess the competence of people flying small unmanned aircraft¹ and make an appropriate recommendation, as part of the CAA's process, in approving operating permissions.
- 1.2 Over the last year there has been a considerable interest in organisations wishing to obtain CAA approval as an NQE. The purpose of the NQE, from the CAA's point of view, is to assure that an appropriate level of 'piloting' competence can be demonstrated, but that the cost and timescale to do this is not limited by the CAA's overall commitments.
- 1.3 The purpose of this Information Notice (IN) is to provide additional clarification on the role and the scope of the privileges granted under the CAA NQE approval. It also provides additional guidance on the CAA's expectations with respect to the assessment process and the standardisation considerations for all CAA approved NQEs.

¹ "Small unmanned aircraft" means any unmanned aircraft, other than a balloon or a kite, having a mass of not more than 20kg without its fuel but including any articles or equipment installed in or attached to the aircraft at the commencement of its flight (ANO 2016)

2 Scope

- 2.1 An NQE is approved by the CAA under the authority of article 268 of the UK Air Navigation Order 2016 (the Order) and as such the approval is bounded by the limits of UK legislation. This limitation similarly extends to any permission, exemption or other approval that is granted under the Order.
- 2.2 The NQE approval is not transferable (except as a result of change in ownership) and, unless specifically addressed and stated within the approval, cannot be extended to another organisation or additional locations without CAA approval. An NQE approval is also limited to organisations whose primary place of business is in the UK. Recommendations made to the CAA are solely in respect of individuals wishing to apply for permission to operate within the UK. It does not, and should not, be considered to provide or infer any UK endorsement for activities within any other country.
- 2.3 The CAA scheme of fees and charges for NQEs and operating permissions is similarly based on the above legislative authority. Hence, overseas organisations and assessment locations are excluded.

3 The Role

- 3.1 Before a small unmanned aircraft operating permission can be issued, the CAA must be satisfied that the defined operation(s) can be conducted safely. This is achieved through the assessment of the information provided at application covering the organisation (key persons, processes and procedures), the aircraft, and the competence of its operating personnel.
- 3.2 Recommendations from NQEs provide the CAA with an acceptable demonstration of competence of the person in charge of a small unmanned aircraft. The recommendation can only be made once the NQE is satisfied that the individual has demonstrated appropriate knowledge of the applicable regulations, policy and/or the capability to fly the aircraft in accordance with his/her organisation's operational procedures. To achieve this, the NQE must assess the individual in accordance with the requirements that are set out in CAP 722. NQEs must hold and maintain detailed knowledge and experience across the full range of topics in order to discharge their responsibilities under the terms of their Approval (see CAP 722 Appendix E14).
- 3.3 Operators do not need to have any formal qualifications to fly a small unmanned aircraft. Therefore NQE assessments are not, and must not, be considered or advertised as leading to a recognised qualification or pilot licence.

4 The Scope of Privileges Under NQE Approval

- 4.1 NQEs are approved in either a 'full' or 'restricted' category basis. A full category NQE is entitled to make recommendations which state that an individual has successfully demonstrated a capability to operate small unmanned aircraft safely by meeting all critical elements of the competency assessment, i.e. adequate theoretical knowledge/airmanship and a practical flight assessment. A full category NQE may also make an assessment of, and recommendation regarding, the prospective operator's Operations Manual. A restricted category NQE is limited to making recommendations following a successful practical flight assessment only.
- 4.2 An NQE can offer additional services, but these must be clearly defined as outside the scope of the CAA approval and that they are provided on a purely commercial service basis. Where such services are provided, these cannot have any conflict of interest in respect of providing an independent assessment and recommendation under the approval. For example, a full category NQE recommendation that includes assessment of the student's Operations Manual, cannot be based on services to aid generation (draft material) or review of that manual's

element, unless adequate separation of these services can be demonstrated and is agreed by the CAA.

5 Assessment Considerations and Standardisation Requirements

5.1 The core elements that constitute capability, e.g. knowledge, aircraft operation and experience are described in CAP 722. The following paragraphs detail the CAA's expectations of how this should be assessed.

5.2 Theoretical Knowledge Material

5.2.1 Each area defined in CAP 722 Appendix E Remote Pilot Theoretical Knowledge / General Airmanship Syllabus must be examined in sufficient depth to establish that students hold a sufficient level of understanding of the topic, in order to be able to determine the intent and methods of compliance and how this relates to their own intended operation. Particular attention should be made to how problem scenarios are addressed.

5.3 Assessment Methods

5.3.1 Assessment of knowledge/understanding by examination. Examination questions may be in the following formats:

- a) Multiple Choice questions – a choice of no less than 4 answers.
- b) Long Answer questions.
- c) A mixture of both Multiple Choice and Long Answer questions.

5.3.2 The examination must consist of a minimum of 40 questions that cover the full range of subjects detailed in the CAP 722 Appendix E29 (Small Unmanned Aircraft – Remote Pilot Theoretical Knowledge/General Airmanship Syllabus). Where retaking of examinations is permitted, the student must sit a different set of questions than previously used. Each examination can be conducted via an electronic or a paper based assessment format but must be of a closed book format (except when questions require reference to charts, or other sources of specific aeronautical information). The minimum pass mark must be no less than 75%.

5.3.3 Candidates who have disabilities, such as dyslexia, should be granted an extra 10% of time to complete the examination.

5.3.4 If part of the examination is conducted by other means, e.g. oral discussion, an adequate summary of the questions and responses must be noted, including the identity of examiner.

5.3.5 The record keeping of examinations must support a demonstration of this approach. A record of each examination must be retained by the NQE for a minimum of 2 years.

5.4 Practical Flight Assessment

5.4.1 This must ensure that the student/operator is able to undertake the range of operations documented in their own Operations Manual. The assessment should address aspects from site/location assessment, preparation/flight planning, pre-flight checks, flight procedures including use of automation and direct/manual control and abnormal/failure scenarios.

5.5 Operations Manual Assessment

5.5.1 Any review of the Operations Manual, within the scope of NQE approval, must establish that the document is complete and contains all relevant information as described in CAP 722 and

is of suitable quality and control to represent and support the operator in the discharge of his/her responsibilities. Reference to regulatory or guidance material, such as the Air Navigation Order, CAP 722 etc. must be up to date and appropriately reflected within the document.

6 CAP 722

- 6.1 The details within this IN will be incorporated into **CAP 722** as appropriate at its next amendment. However, a link to this IN will accompany the document on the CAA website.

7 Queries

- 7.1 Any queries or requests for further guidance arising from this communication should be addressed to UAVenquiries@caa.co.uk.

8 Cancellation

- 8.1 This Information Notice will remain in force until further notice.