



RECREATIONAL
AVIATION AUSTRALIA

CHAPTER ONE

The Flight Instructor

In the 1980's, the first Instructors were drawn from the longest surviving ultralight pilots. They received little formal training or assurance of standardisation. RAAus has significantly evolved as an organisation since those early days. Survivability and aircraft handling skills which may have been appropriate in early ultralight instruction are now insufficient. Instructing is a skill that can be taught but teaching is an art that must be developed.

Only by acknowledging and integrating recognised teaching methods can we really start to address the requirements that denote a good Instructor in any aviation organisation.



The Flight Instructor

A natural or highly skilled pilot does not necessarily make a natural Instructor. So often, “good pilots” or those with extensive experience and currency find their way to the cockpit as an Instructor. In many cases these naturally gifted or developed pilots arrive to this point from drive, determination, singularity or pure focus and not only have their methods never been dissected, they are simply “intuitive” about what they do and how they achieve it.

Many sporting champions have often been asked what it is that makes them so successful and the response is “I don’t know I just do it!” These traits are not necessarily complementary with the more subtle and less intuitive attributes of a good teacher.

In many cases the pilot who has had to labour, analyse and dissect their own journey with the humility and understanding of their own humanity provides a far more appropriate means of imparting learning. It was once said that a truly “mature” pilot must have three key attributes; they must be **humble, approachable and creditable**. These attributes are just as vital for the Instructor.

The true Instructor is always acting from ‘conscious competence’; always operating in the deliberate ‘here and now’, their teaching is evident even when not actually teaching and as a result they are always displaying the characteristics of an appropriate role model.

The instructor must be a team player, even if it’s just a team of two! The instructor and pilot share the responsibility of ensuring the appropriate level of pilot competency and airmanship is achieved by the candidate whilst under instruction. The integrity and strength of this training inevitably shapes the future behaviour of the pilot in the majority of cases.



The role of the flight Instructor

This is borne out through accident investigations, where deficiencies in training or behavioural primacy have often been identified as the catalyst for the 'accident waiting to happen'.

The instructor fulfills a pivotal role in the training process and is therefore the cornerstone of the training standard for all pilots. This underlines the importance of an appropriate reference standard and accompanying resource material, unique to RAAus, to assist Instructor standards continue to be maintained to the highest level.

Potential Instructors understanding the philosophies above is almost as critical as meeting the appropriate aeronautical minimums set out in the Operations Manual. The motivation for becoming an Instructor, whilst worthy on its own, should also be considered based on the applicants desire to educate, motivate and shape potential pilots.

It should not be viewed as a mechanism to gain standing in the flying community, accrue command hours or for increasing self-worth. Instructor recommendations by CFIs should also be carefully considered on the same lines, as the commitment to the teaching process should outweigh any other personal motivations. It has been noted that a candidate only really starts to learn about flying when charged with the responsibility to teach it.

It could be said that the role of the flight Instructor is not necessarily for the pilot who loves flying, but for the person who loves to teach. The reward is not in the delivery of the knowledge, but knowing the knowledge has been imparted in the clearest and most effective method for each student. With this in mind, clear understanding and application of accepted Principles and Methods of Instruction (PMI, see chapter four) is the key to delivering effective learning. In essence the role of an Instructor is to facilitate learning through the delivery of appropriate knowledge, skills and demonstration of attitude and airmanship.



Further consideration for PMI delivery must be given to the learning environment. The dynamic, noisy and mobile classroom of the cockpit is a far cry from the quiet, controlled and sterile environment of a classroom or normal learning environment. Included in these considerations is heightened elements of fear, uncertainty and concentration as additional challenges for the student and Instructor. The importance of clear, simple and well developed instruction is imperative in the airborne classroom where workload, focus and understanding of foreign concepts are regularly challenged.

Instructor development

Instructor development is an ongoing process provided in stages by the RAAus Operations Manual. Candidates move from Flight Instructor to Senior Instructor and possible approval to the position of Chief Flying Instructor (CFI). The role of CFI is not an eventual outcome for all Instructors, as it includes significant responsibilities including effective management of the flight school. These responsibilities should be referenced from the relevant Sections of the Operations Manual.

It is critical therefore that the development of the flight Instructor be appropriately mentored and monitored by the CFI. The baton for this development phase passes from the Instructor Trainer (IT) once the Instructor rating is issued to the training environment. Practical development must be cemented with “direct supervision” by the CFI. This can often present challenges for the CFI who now takes on a dual training role over and above the school management. This role must be considered by both parties in ongoing training reviews if the newly approved Instructor is to develop and mature effectively within RAAus. The 90 day check is only a small part of this imperative and interactive phase of Instructor development.

The CFI needs to ensure time is available to monitor and develop new instructors, which has the added benefit of ensuring standardisation is also maintained if a school operates with a number of instructors. RAAus Operations has released further guidance material via a Recreational Aviation Advisory Publication (RAAP) on instructor supervision.

This is available on the website for Instructor Training Approval holders and CFIs wishing to gain a better understanding of mentoring and development for new instructors.

Understanding the role of the flight Instructor is further explored in Chapter 3 Choosing An Instructor Candidate of this manual.

Whether you are a veteran instructor or a potential candidate reading this for the first time, we commend you on taking the first step to self-improvement as a Flight Instructor, confirming concepts that you have already developed, refreshing your knowledge base or considering the most rewarding of pursuits that is the role of the RAAus Flight Instructor.