

INSTRUMENT METEOROLOGICAL CONDITIONS RATING

(IMC)

The IMC rating allows the holder to fly within more limiting weather and can potentially provide an additional margin of safety should conditions deteriorate during a flight. The IMC rating provides a time and cost effective alternative to the full Instrument Rating (IR). The IMC is a UK only rating and can be endorsed on a UK or UK issued JAA licence and used within UK airspace.

FLIGHT TRAINING REQUIREMENTS. Candidates must complete a minimum of 25 hours of flying following PPL issue before applying for the IMC rating. It is worth keeping in mind that many candidates complete a greater number of flight training hours. The flying hours must include the following:

- 10 hours as Pilot in Command.
- 5 hours as Pilot in Command on cross country flights.
- 15 hours as Pilot under Training in instrument flying during the IMC course.
- 5 hours of training may be conducted in a Flight Simulator or Flight and Navigational Procedures Trainer (FNPT), although most candidates complete all the required flight training hours within the aircraft.
- 10 hours total flight time by sole reference to instruments during IMC course.

THEORETICAL KNOWLEDGE SUBJECTS. A single ground exam covers subjects drawn from the IMC and PPL syllabuses and includes questions on planning and executing a typical flight under Instrument Flight Rules (IFR) outside controlled airspace.

RADIOTELEPHONY OPERATOR'S LICENSE (FRTOL). Applicants for an IMC rating must hold a valid Flight Radiotelephony Operator's Licence.

TRAINING CREDITS. Credits towards flight training and theoretical elements are available. These are dependent upon previous training and experience.

PRIVATE PILOTS LICENCE SKILLS TEST. The IMC Skills Test is undertaken once all flight training and theoretical examinations are complete. The IMC Skills Test includes the following:

- Pre-flight planning including:
 - Weather and airspace interpretation as well as aircraft performance planning.
- Flight test to demonstrate the following abilities:
 - Use of full and limited panel instrument flying.
 - Use of radio navigation aids whilst flying.
 - Instrument approach procedures.
 - Bad weather circuits and landings.

CURRENCY. The IMC rating is valid for 25 months from the date of the successful test. A flight test is required to revalidate or renew the rating. It is worth keeping in mind that regular instrument flying practice is required to ensure a realistic level of safe currency.

THE EUROPEAN AVIATION SAFETY AGENCY (EASA) AND THE IMC. In April 2012 new European legislation will come into effect which will affect the licence privileges of many pilots. At the time of writing it is unclear as to what impact this legislation will have upon the IMC rating. It has been suggested that holders of a current IMC rating may be able to retain the privileges or be granted a level of future dispensation. However this remains speculation as final details have yet to be agreed. We suggest that current IMC holders or prospective candidates consult the links below for the latest information.

ADDITIONAL REFERENCES. Additional information can be found by using the following links:

- Civil Aviation Authority European Licensing

www.caa.co.uk/eupilotlicensing

- European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA)

www.easa.eu.int

- LASORS, Section E4

www.caa.co.uk and search "LASORS"