

For Information

Legislative Council Panel on Public Service

Recruitment and Retention of Flight Operations Inspectorate in the Civil Aviation Department

Purpose

This paper briefs Members on the recruitment and retention of the flight operations inspectorate in the Civil Aviation Department (CAD), in response to the request of the Chairman of the Panel on Public Service for the Administration to provide an information paper on this item at the work plan meeting on 11 November 2019.

Background

2. The flight operations inspectorate¹ in the Flight Standards Office of CAD is responsible for monitoring the safety performance and operating standards of Air Operator's Certificate (AOC) holders in Hong Kong, so as to ensure their compliance with the standards and recommended practices of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO). At present, there are four Flight Operations Inspector (Consultant) (FOI(C)) posts and 11 Senior Operations Officer (Senior Operations Inspector) (SOI) posts² (hereafter collectively referred to as "flight operations inspectorate") in CAD. FOI(C)s are non-civil service contract posts while SOIs are civil service posts. All of these posts report to the Chief, Flight Standards (a Chief Operations Officer at the rank of D1). In view of the requirements as mentioned in ICAO Document 8335 – *Manual of Procedures for Operations Inspection, Certification and Continued Surveillance* and their duties, the flight operations inspectorate is required to possess professional pilot licences (i.e. Commercial Pilot's Licence or Airline Transport Pilot's Licence as appropriate). The entry requirements and salary/pay scale of FOI(C)s and SOIs are at **Annexes A and B** respectively.

¹ Flight operations inspectorate is one of the three streams of the Operations Officer grade. The other two streams are airworthiness (main duties include assessment of airworthiness standards for aircraft and assessment of aircraft maintenance licences) and aviation administration (main duties include regulation of air services and air navigation services, and regulatory duties associated with licensing of aerodromes and security) respectively.

² In addition to FOI(C)s and SOIs, there is also one Senior Operations Officer (Helicopter Operations Inspector) (HOI) in the Flight Standards Office of CAD who is responsible for monitoring the safety performance and operating standards of helicopter operators. In addition, we will create an additional HOI post to cope with the increasing workload.

Recruitment and Retention of the Flight Operations Inspectorate

Challenges

3. Prior to the outbreak of the novel coronavirus in end 2019/early 2020, the aviation industry has been growing both locally and globally in recent years. As an illustration, the number of registered aircrafts in Hong Kong has increased by 56% from 223 to 347 over the past decade (i.e. from March 2009 to March 2019), and the number of applications for flight crew licences has also increased by 21% from 2 901 to 3 514 during the same period. The growing industry has posed challenges to the recruitment and retention of the flight operations inspectorate on two fronts: on the one hand, a growing industry brings increasing workload on the flight operations inspectorate and creates additional demand for manpower. On the other hand, it has intensified competition for recruiting professional pilots in the private sector, namely the airlines and other market players, to serve as flight operations inspectorate. The degree of pressure from the latter fluctuates and is very much affected by the ups and downs of the market.

Enhanced Measures

4. To cope with the above challenges, CAD has implemented a series of enhanced measures, including the following ongoing initiatives on recruitment to attract a wider pool of candidates with a view to filling the vacancies in a more timely manner: -

- (a) conducting recruitment exercises involving posts in the flight operations inspectorate on a regular basis ;
- (b) where applicable, granting incremental credit for experience to the newly recruited SOIs³ to attract more experienced candidates to apply;
- (c) waiving the Hong Kong permanent resident requirement in recruiting flight operations inspectorate so as to widen the pool of potential candidates; and
- (d) in addition to the local newspapers and websites, placing recruitment advertisements in the Flight International magazine and

³ I.e. one increment for every completed year of relevant experience exceeding the stipulated minimum and up to the maximum point of the Senior Operations Officer rank (i.e. Master Pay Scale Point 49). Incremental credit for experience is not applicable to FOI(C)s which are non-civil service contract posts.

the website flightglobal.com in order to reach the international community of professional pilots for attracting their applications.

5. Apart from the above recruitment efforts, we have also made use of the Post-retirement Service Contract (PRSC) Scheme to retain the service of experienced and worthy retired SOIs. The retention of their services will not only help temporarily relieve our manpower shortfall, but also allow the retired SOIs to serve as mentors of junior inspectorate for more efficient transfer of skills and knowledge. Since December 2019, two retired SOIs have been employed under the scheme for the purposes.

6. With a view to better utilising the available inspectorate manpower, CAD has also conducted a critical review on the job duties of flight operations inspectorate. Taking reference from overseas jurisdictions, CAD has started to provide the necessary on-the-job training to other professional grade staff in CAD (namely Operations Officers (Aviation Administration)) with appropriate background since October 2019, with a view to assigning them with some inspectorate duties not requiring pilot qualification after successful completion of such training. The aforementioned inspectorate duties are mainly related to cabin safety, ramp/station operations and other supporting functions. Examples include routine cabin/ramp/station inspections, assessment of training and apparatus for safety and emergency procedures for cabin crew, and researching and updating policies on flight standards. This arrangement is also practiced by other civil aviation authorities like Transport Canada, whose cabin safety inspectors⁴ are not required to possess pilot qualifications but only operational and management experience with air operators is required. In this regard, the workload of FOI(C)s and SOIs can be partially relieved and their job duties can also be re-aligned to focused areas depending on the level of experience and qualifications required. At the same time, the technical portfolio of the Operations Officer grade can also be enriched thus conducive to develop more multidisciplinary talents for CAD.

7. With the above measures, the flight operations inspectorate has been able to cope with the increasing workload of its regulatory oversight of the AOC holders. We are also seeing gradual improvements in the manpower situation despite the above-mentioned mounting pressure and challenges. The number of flight operations inspectors has been increasing gradually from nine in 2015 to 11 as at February 2020.

⁴ Cabin Safety Inspectors of Transport Canada are responsible for cabin safety practices. They evaluate flight attendant manuals and training programmes, and cabin safety practices of air operators, and conduct pre-flight, in-flight, aircraft, base and training inspections.

Way Forward

8. At present, we have four vacancies of flight operations inspectorate (i.e. four SOIs) out of a total of 15 positions of FOI(C) and SOI, but as mentioned in paragraph 5 above, we have separately recruited two PRSC officers to temporarily supplement the manpower, hence the working strength of flight operations inspectorate is currently 13. CAD will continue to press ahead with our enhanced measures and monitor the manpower situation of the flight operations inspectorate. We plan to launch the next recruitment exercise for SOIs in the second quarter of 2020 so as to fill the four vacancies as well as one additional SOI post to be created. We will also continue to improve our recruitment measures and make use of the PRSC scheme to temporarily supplement the required manpower as appropriate.

9. One new recruitment measure being devised is the relaxation of the medical requirement for appointment to FOI(C)s and SOIs. We intend to recruit a limited number of flight operations inspectorate who are experienced pilots but without a current Class One Medical Certificate. A Class One Medical Certificate is a stringent medical requirement to ensure that pilots are fit for flying duties. Given the strong demand for professional pilots, after consulting the aviation industry and making reference to overseas practices like those of the United Kingdom Civil Aviation Authority and the European Union Aviation Safety Agency, CAD has since July 2019 allowed AOC holders to employ experienced pilots who do not have a Class One Medical Certificate as flight examiners in simulators.

10. Similar to these flight examiners, FOI(C)s and SOIs are not heavily involved in flying duties. Hence, similar relaxation in medical requirement may also be applied to their recruitment. This will help CAD attract pilots from the civil aviation industry with experience and professional expertise but without a current Class One Medical Certificate (e.g. some retired pilots) to apply for these posts. That said, to preserve flexibility in job assignment, CAD will ensure that flight operations inspectorate possessing current Class One Medical Certificates are the mainstream in the workforce of Flight Standards Office, and only they will be assigned inspection duties that require the possession of Class One Medical Certificate in accordance with ICAO Document 8335 (e.g. line or flight crew licensing checks). CAD plans to apply the above relaxation of medical requirement in the next SOIs recruitment exercise in the second quarter of 2020 to widen the pool of potential candidates.

Civil Aviation Department
April 2020

**Entry Requirements and Salary of
Flight Operations Inspector (Consultant)**

Direct Entry Requirements

Candidates should have –

- (a) a valid International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) contracting state's Airline Transport Pilot's Licence (ATPL) (Aeroplane) with not less than 5 000 hours air transport pilot-in-command experience (including a current Class One Medical Certificate)¹, of which a significant proportion should be on civil transport multi-engine aeroplanes;
- (b) recent experience in civil aviation flight operations management and have been in current practice as a Training Captain (Instrument Rating Examiner / Type Rating Examiner) preferably on A320, A321, A330, A340, A350, A380, B747 or B777 aircraft;
- (c) not less than 12 years' relevant experience; and
- (d) strong command of written and spoken English.

Salary

HK\$ 150,950 per month (equivalent to the minimum pay point of D1 rank)

¹ As mentioned in paragraphs 9 and 10 of the paper, the Civil Aviation Department is devising a new recruitment measure of relaxing medical requirement for appointment to Flight Operations Inspector (Consultant) (FOI(C)) with a view to recruiting a limited number of FOI(C)s who are experienced pilots but without a current Class One Medical Certificate.

**Entry Requirements and Pay Scale of
Senior Operations Officer (Senior Operations Inspector)**

Direct Entry Requirements

Candidates should have –

- (a)(i) a valid International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) contracting state's Airline Transport Pilot's Licence (ATPL) (Aeroplane) with a current Class One Medical Certificate¹ and eight years' relevant post-licence experience and at least 5 000 hours of commercial transport flying experience of which a minimum of 3 000 hours should be on multi-engine aeroplanes; or
 - (ii) a valid ICAO contracting state's Commercial Pilot's Licence (CPL) (Aeroplane) with Multi-engine Instrument Rating; and a minimum of seven years' post-licence experience in civil aviation management and operations or as a regulator; and have passed the ATPL examinations; and
- (b) strong command of written and spoken English.

Pay Scale

Master Pay Scale Point 45 – 49 (HK\$ 117,580 – HK\$ 135,470)

¹ As mentioned in paragraphs 9 and 10 of the paper, the Civil Aviation Department is devising a new recruitment measure of relaxing medical requirement for appointment to Senior Operations Officer (Senior Operations Inspector) (SOI) with a view to recruiting a limited number of SOIs who are experienced pilots but without a current Class One Medical Certificate.