

“Must have a Current ICAO Licence”

On occasion, an interesting career posting happens along and the temptation to read it can at times be irresistible. Although I enjoy my current endeavour - leading my Consultancy - sometimes the ‘grass looks so much greener...’

The majority of postings are normally precise and to the point; not making for the most stimulating read perhaps but a few are exciting and I have been tempted on several occasions to respond. The type of position that grabs my interest is typically one hailing from a distant port with a major international airline or National Authority. In both instances, HR personnel normally describe the minimum qualification and experience level required. Nevertheless, there is a growing trend to state a prerequisite that simply cannot be met!

The proviso may be included because it sounds good, someone else recommended it and/or simply because the HR specialist did not understand the significance of the request; regardless, misinformation persists in both the industry and at the Regulatory level, the latter I have noticed, having also requested the impossible. I am of course referring to the mysterious and elusive ‘ICAO Licence’ requirement i.e. the “ICAO issued AME Licence”.

In short, the ICAO does not issue any licences at all. Licences are issued by ICAO Contracting States (i.e. UAE, Canada, New Zealand, United Kingdom, America, etc.) on the basis of ‘Standards and Recommended Practices’ (SARPs) contained in Annex 1 (Personnel Licensing) to the Convention on International Civil Aviation (the Chicago Convention). Nevertheless, the ICAO license issue is such a common misconception that the ICAO speaks directly to it in Doc 9379 / AN/917, which states in part:

4.1 ICAO licences

4.1.1 What is an ICAO licence?

The aviation community often makes reference to an “ICAO licence”, which has led some people to believe that ICAO actually issues licences. This is not the case. The clause “ICAO licence” is an informal but widely used way of referring to licences that are issued by Contracting States on the basis of the SARPs contained in Annex 1. ...”

The confusion is so endemic that many professionals, who should arguably know better, also habitually refer to the “ICAO licence” in Regulation and Policy, causing other people to believe that the ICAO issues licences. The fact is there is not a single international licence issued by the ICAO. Contracting States to the 1947 Chicago Convention, equating to 192 Members (18th Nov. 2017), issue their own licences based on National Regulation in conformity with Annex 1 specifications. Member States however, can validate licences issued by other Contracting States on the basis of bilateral or multilateral agreements or the fulfilment of nationally legislated requirements. Alternatively, a State may also issue a licence founded on a foreign licence held by an applicant and in so doing, the Licensing Authority accepts the fact that holding a foreign licence is an acceptable method to demonstrate compliance with its own national licensing regulation (Annex 1 compliant). The decision therefore to validate or convert a foreign licence is at the discretion of a National Authority.

As a Consultant, I am constantly researching, reviewing and referencing assorted material and was recently surprised to read in the 'Official Journal of the European Union L 362 (Legislation Volume 57) specifically 'COMMISSION REGULATION (EU) No 1321/2014' (an absolutely riveting read, right up there with 'Gone With The Wind') two references MA 607(b)(2) & 145.A.30(j)(5)(ii) that in my opinion adds to the ICAO license confusion. Both references state "... **A valid ICAO aircraft maintenance license...**"!

The above criterion may have been the result of a translation error or simple omission, such as the noun 'equivalent', in respect to the requirements of ICAO Annex 1. Nevertheless, the Legislation appears to get it right in Appendix IV 1.(a) "*The person shall hold a licence or a certifying staff authorisation issued under national regulations in full compliance with ICAO Annex 1*". Regardless, it is not possible to hold a 'valid ICAO Aircraft Maintenance License' as there is no such animal; only National Licences are available, which may or may not conform to the ICAO Annex 1 requirements.