

# COME FLY

DEMAND FOR QUALITY AIRLINE PILOTS IN AUSTRALIA REMAINS HIGH BUT MORE CARRIERS ARE MOVING AWAY FROM THE TRADITIONAL SOURCES OF PILOT RECRUITMENT SUCH AS GA AND THE MILITARY IN FAVOUR OF IN-HOUSE INSTRUCTION OR SPECIALISED OUTSOURCED TRAINING. DEREK ROYAL AND NICOLE MURRELL TAKE A CLOSER LOOK AT A PHENOMENON THAT HAS CAUSED PLENTY OF DEBATE.

WORDS Derek Royal & Nicole Murrell

# WITH US

'CADETS HAVE VIRTUALLY THE SAME PERFORMANCE STANDARDS AS THE DIRECT ENTRY PILOTS'



**B**efore the global financial crisis, the aviation industry in Australia and the broader Asia Pacific region suffered from a chronic pilot shortage. For airlines such as Regional Express (Rex), the loss of tech crew to the majors almost sent the company spiralling into bankruptcy. To stay in operation and ahead of the competition, Rex in 2007 established a subsidiary - the Australian Airline Pilot Academy (AAPA) - to run intensive live-in pilot training customised for the airline's own pilot cadet scheme. Rex saw this as a way to produce their own cadet pilots "from scratch" rather than accept pilots from General Aviation boasting sufficient minimum hours but not necessarily the desired skill level to be airline pilots.

According to Rex, results from comprehensive simulator and aircraft proficiency tests have conclusively proven that cadets in their first year of flying demonstrate equal skills in all aspects tested, while in their second year of flying their performance surpasses the more experienced direct intake pilots with over 1500 hours.

AAPA students pay close to \$100,000 for training and successful graduates become Rex co-pilots on the Saab 340, or first officers with other Rex Group companies.

So how do youngsters with ambitions of becoming airline pilots qualify for the AAPA's specialised training course?

"We do have some internal parameters we use during the cadet selection phase," AAPA Director (Chairman) Dale Hall tells Aviator. "This is a minimum score on a co-ordination skills test that all cadets undertake if they make it to the second round of the selection phase. We look for sound academic results as well as passing a sim test if they reach the third stage of selection. However, these are not solely the selection criteria as we place a great deal of importance on an individual's attitude. Some cadets can have up to three interviews."

The AAPA program is designed to train airline pilots, and cadets graduate with a CPL and multi-engine and command instrument ratings. "On day one they are issued with uniforms and everything they need to complete the course," Hall says. "Our standard course is a 32 week live in course, all ground school training, exams, simulator sessions, accommodation and meals are carried out and catered for on our campus at Wagga Wagga airport. The Campus also has varying sports facilities, heated pool, gym, various courts and a playing field."

Cadets start flight training during Week 2 after initial ground school in the first week. They then complete simultaneous flight training and theory lessons via computer-based training and tutorials to the point where they are ready to sit their PPL exams and flight test in about Week 10. The cadets continue with similar training through the CPL program and in about Week 32 complete their multi engine and CFR ratings.

At the time of writing, Hall said 99 students had graduated from AAPA, while 76 had been checked to line.

The cadet program costs \$98,000, which includes all flying and simulator training (including aircraft and instructors), ground schools and theory lessons for each CASA subject, all exam costs, all books, maps, charts, manuals and materials (including Jepps), single room accommodation and three meals per day for the full 32 weeks.

"Once cadets have completed the program, they graduate with a CPL, Multi Engine (endorsement) and Command Instrument Rating," Hall says. "We also have approval to issue a Diploma of Aviation (Instrument Operations), once a cadet has graduated and completed their line training on the Saab type."

Cadets will learn to fly in Piper PA28 Warrior and Piper PA44 Seminole aircraft, all fitted with Avidyne glass cockpit and dual Garmin GPS.

While the cost of the course is prohibitive to many, the Rex Cadetship is in fact a training loan-based program. "Cadet's sign on to the agreed training fee and they pay 25 per cent up front," Hall says. "Should they pass the course they are guaranteed a first officer position within the Rex group of companies. The remainder to the training loan is then paid off by incremental salary deduction once they are checked to line as a first officer. A reduction in course fee is awarded to the best performing cadet of each course, additionally, should a cadet stay with the group for a period of about six years, an additional loyalty award/scholarship is granted, which further reduces the training loan."

Apart from training Rex pilots AAPA also trains about 80 cadet pilots per year for Air Arabia under contract from Alpha Aviation Group in the flying component of the Multi crew pilot license (MPL).



**SENATE INQUIRY**

A recent Senate Inquiry into Pilot Training recommended all airline pilots to have a minimum of 1500 hours flight experience. Most cadets graduate with around 200 hours, a figure some critics consider to be grossly inadequate. How, the critics ask, can cadets with just 200 hours in their logbooks safely transport passengers from A to B in aircraft worth millions of dollars?

Following a series of incidents involving inexperienced Australian airline pilots, Independent Senator Nick Xenophon and the Australian International Pilots Association (AIPA) have been the most vocal critics of the current system and through the Senate Inquiry have led the push for the federal government to introduce a mandatory experience and safety management plan.

But the Inquiry has polarised the industry and obviously, not everyone agrees with the critics. Some of the criticism has been deemed unfair.

"I don't think it is a question of fairness but more what is the agenda behind the criticism," Hall says. "Military pilots have even fewer training hours and yet are entrusted with sophisticated fighter jets. The number of training hours is only one parameter. Over at Rex we have followed up on the quality of the cadets by tracking quantitatively their performance at the twice yearly checks. We have found that the cadets have virtually the same performance standards as the direct entry pilots with more than 1500 hours experience even on the first year after graduation. Their performance standards overtake the direct entry ones from the second year."

So why is a cadet fresh out of AAPA with minimal hours a better option for an airline job than a GA commercial pilot who has hands-on experience in the industry?

"Because a cadet graduate from AAPA is trained to be an airline pilot, they are trained to fly the aircraft by attitude and by procedure; they use daily the same performance standards as most airlines will. The same format of FCOM and procedures manuals that most airlines will use, they use daily. They are taught from the very first day the discipline and approach of an airline pilot. In fact, it is often so much harder to unlearn the bad habits that the GA pilots bring to the airline from their previous operating environment."

"If done correctly, specialised airline pilot training programs give a known standard of pilot. It allows airlines to tailor their individual programme to match their check and training system. They can monitor and control pilot numbers during peaks and troughs in the cycle because they can start a course and know on a given date they will have X number of pilots ready to start type rating. All at the same standard and experience. They then have a known quantity that

they can factor and build into their own check and training structure or program."

Those in favour of cadet programs believe they deliver a higher standard of first officer and safety of flight when the training coincides with a Registered Training Organisation (RTO) with close links to an airline; ensuring a higher standard of working conditions and compliance and to greatly assist in developing non-technical skills early in a pilot's career.

**CTC AVIATION (NZ)**

Apart from AAPA, there are other specialised training organisations that provide quality airline pilot training. Organisations such as New Zealand's CTC Aviation (NZ) Limited.

CTC has placed thousands of cadets with several airline partners, including Jetstar; while the organisation recently placed their one-thousandth cadet with airline partner easyJet.

When asked what prerequisites are required for acceptance into CTC's airline pilot programs, CEO Ian Calvert, told Aviator that "passion for aviation is key, along with a commitment both to initial training and to a career that involves ongoing training and development".

Initial prerequisites such as age, academic qualifications, and citizenship; vary depending on the program/course chosen. If the initial prerequisites are met, then a potential cadet undergoes CTC's own selection process - a process which has been created in conjunction with the company's airline partners.

Depending on the program or course, the number of cadets accepted per intake varies. "We have courses starting every couple of months, and the size of the group can range from



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four to 10 cadets," Calvert says. "Our agreement with Jetstar will see 32 ab-initio pilots from Australia/New Zealand enter training in 2012 as part of the Jetstar Cadet Pilot Program."

CTC's course costs are competitive in the international market for professional airline cadet pilot training. Training costs vary depending on the program, but always include everything required to complete the training program in full. Accommodation at CTC's facilities is part of the cost.

Initial training is generally completed in the Diamond DA20. Following this, a cadet can expect to fly the Cessna 172, some of which are fitted with the Garmin G1000 Glass Cockpit used for instrument flying. The final stage of the ab-initio training takes place in the Diamond DA42 Twinstar, equipped with Garmin G1000 Glass Cockpit and a computerised engine-management system similar to that in a modern jet airliner.

So what is the training regime like at CTC?

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'INITIAL TRAINING IS GENERALLY COMPLETED IN THE DIAMOND DA20'

AAPA STUDENTS STAY ON CAMPUS AT WAGGA WAGGA AIRPORT.

"As our programs are totally focussed on the needs of an airline pilot, the training program is conducted with a strong focus on professionalism, safety, and skill development," Calvert says. "For example, cadets wear a uniform, follow processes for aircraft sign-out and operation, operate to a flying roster, and use checklists and airline Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). It is an intensive full-time course."

Depending on the program being completed with CTC, as a minimum, cadets will achieve a Commercial Pilots Licence, Multi-Engine Instrument Rating, and will have completed their Airline Transport Pilot Licence theory examinations. Other CTC programs may also see a cadet attaining a Multi-Crew Cooperation Certificate, and Jet Type Rating (A320 or B737), or a flight instructor rating.

CTC receives a limited number of New Zealand Government funded places on training courses (for New Zealand permanent residents only) and while airlines do not guarantee employment, the company works closely with several airline partners to ensure that the number of cadets recruited meets the airline's forecast demand. CTC's high standard of success in training has resulted in almost 100 per cent of cadets being employed with airlines around the world.

When asked to comment on criticism of cadet airline pilot programs, Calvert is adamant they're unjustified.

"The low-hour pilot training model has been successfully used in the northern hemisphere for decades and pilot performance and airline safety has not been comprised," he says. "This is a new concept for New Zealand and Australia, and the success of low-hour pilot placement requires a fundamental shift in the training method from how many FTOs currently operate. The training must be airline focussed from day one, it must receive airline input and feedback during the training process, it needs to be conducted utilising up-to-date training methods and equipment, and it needs to lead to an almost immediate placement in to an operational flying role."

CTC has recently been awarded the contract to manage and supply pilots to the British Airways Future Pilot Program, indicating the support of low-hour pilots from established

legacy carriers as well as airlines operating on a low-cost model.

"The high-standard of training at CTC and the fact that it is entirely airline focussed ensures the pilot is professionally prepared, in both flying skill and attitude, to enter the multi-crew cockpit of an airliner. CTC trains cadets to operate a light-aircraft as close to the way a jet airliner operates as possible – for example, decision making on the approach.

"As airlines look to run more efficiently and economically they are increasingly recognising the value in selecting and training pilots for their specific operation. This allows more stability in their workforce, reduces additional training costs, and allows the training to be outsourced to selected professional FTOs like CTC where the expertise for such training lies."

#### CAE GLOBAL ACADEMY, PERTH

As part of the world's largest network of ab-initio flight training schools – now 11 schools with a capacity of providing up to 1,800 graduates per year – the CAE Global Academy, Perth specialises in training airline pilots from raw recruits with no flying experience to multi-engine instrument rated jet first officers. The CAE Global Academy network provides a world-class advanced learning environment for training the highest-quality professional pilots.

This isn't the first instance where an Embraer Phenom 100 has been dedicated to the purpose of education and training.

In October 2011, Embraer announced the use of a Phenom 100 as a 'flying classroom' by Barrington Irving – the hitherto youngest African American pilot to fly solo around the world in 2007 at age 23 – to encourage students to pursue education in science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM).

Leading up to an around-the-world trip planned for 2013, Barrington will communicate with thousands of students during his flights leading up to and including the trip, from his classroom in the sky via live video feed. His goal is to bring a live 41-foot classroom to more than one million students throughout the United States and the rest of the world. ✪

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