

Guidance Material for Small Unmanned Aircraft (SUA) Permission, Pilot Competency Certificate & Special Authorisation / Approval

Specific Operating Permission - SOP:

Small Unmanned Aircraft SOP's are issued when a SUA / Drone / RPAS operator intends to fly beyond the statutory limitations as detailed in SI. 563/2015 and has completed a safety course of instruction available at SUA Registered Training Facilities. The theoretical / flight training received is valid for two years upon completion and the SUA Specific Operating Permission is valid for a period not exceeding two years from date of issue. The key to safe and successful Drone flight operations is based on safety aviation philosophy, performance and risk principles through continued training and awareness. Therefore, SOP holders are required to undergo refresher / renewal training through an SUA Registered Training Facility within twelve months of the SOP expiry date if the intention is to renew an expired SOP or for continuous validity of a SOP. This system is based on standard aviation licensing and certification regimes by regulatory bodies across Europe and elsewhere.

Current SOP Operators are required to hold or use Pilot Competency Certificate holders when operating their Drones as a condition of their Specific Operating Permission.

The SOP is valid only in the Republic of Ireland but may be accepted by other National Aviation Authorities in Europe and elsewhere upon application. Ireland has currently no international Bi-Lateral Agreements in place for Drone regulation. Ireland as a member of the European Union is subject to European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) requirements, who are currently considering Drone oversight regulatory architecture for the safety of European Citizens. This process is conducted at many levels before becoming European Law. In the interim national regulation as prescribed by the Irish Aviation Authority and other Public bodies, takes precedence and is subject to legal enforcement.

The SOP application is U.F.100 which is available under the Drone Application Forms menu on this website. For further information, including syllabi, locations and cost of training please contact the SUA Registered Training Facilities listed in this Section on this website.

All SOP Holders are required by the Irish Aviation Authority to have current Insurance cover for third party liability. The monetary value of insurance should be proportionate to the scope and nature of intended use and operation.

Pilot Competency Certificate – PCC:

Small Unmanned Aircraft PCC's are issued on the basis of Application Form U.F.102 which is available in this Section of the website. Prior flight training should be accomplished and can be achieved through instruction available at SUA Registered Training Facilities listed in this Section on this website. PCC's are issued after a SUA Flight Examiner has conducted a satisfactory Skills Test on a PCC applicant and has formally recommended to the Irish Aviation Authority the candidate's suitability.

Under the conditions of a Specific Operating Permission (SOP) any person flying a Drone shall be a holder of a current PCC.

PCC's are valid for a period not exceeding two years from date of issue. Upon expiry of the PCC the holder should reapply using the same Application Form U.F.102 and is subject to a renewal/refresher testing.

PCC's are subject to all conditions/limitations detailed within the SUA SOP's operations manual. Until further National or European legislation is in effect, PCC's are issued as testament to a person's ability to operate Drones safely within the confines of an SOP holder's aircraft performance capability and risk assessment plan as detailed within the operations manual.

SUA Special Authorisation / Approval – SA:

The IAA will consider an application for a one time/one-off specific job from Drone operators based on their National Authorities' Permissions including all documentation i.e. Company Registration, OPs Manual, insurance and a detailed Risk Assessment for the specific operation concerned. This documentation is not exhaustive. If/and after an operator requires to conduct further flights under Irish SOP standards the operator will be required to apply for and attend one of the IAA Small Unmanned Aircraft (SUA)/drone Registered Training Facilities (RTF) as listed in this Section of the website.