

Version  
4.0

# FLIGHT STANDARDS and TRAINING (VHQT D)

Aircrew  
Checkride  
Procedures

 **UNITED VIRTUAL**

United Virtual Airlines

Aircrew Checkride Procedures (ACP)  
Version 4.0

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1 December 2009

From: Chief Pilot  
To: All United Virtual Airlines Pilots  
**Subj: Aircrew Checkride Procedures**

1. Use of this Guide is restricted to UVA Operations.
2. All of us at United Virtual Airlines (UVA) are dedicated to enhancing the enjoyment of flight simulation enthusiasts by providing a realistic, hi-fidelity simulation of airline operations. While flight simulation is just that – a simulation – participation in United Virtual represents an attempt to make the simulation even more realistic while enjoying the social aspects of the Virtual Airlines community.
3. This publication provides the details for the checkride flights used to earn advancement in the ratings.
4. This version release builds on the many changes that have occurred over the last number of years, in the now mature Checkride System at UVA. As always, the goal is to promote good general airmanship, in line with real world standards. We now have detailed Aircrew Standard Operating Procedures (ASOP & ASOPS) together with abundant and detailed “How to Fly” training resources referenced on the VHQT webpage.
5. Pilots are cautioned, that new for this release the guidelines for preparation for a checkride are incomplete without also consulting the companion document, the Aircrew Checkride Procedures Supplement (ACPS). The ACPS has an *effective* date and an *expiry* date, ensure that you are using the correct ACPS for your ride.
6. Any pilot with questions about the checkrides, procedures, or grading criteria, should contact their Domicile Manager, or the [Chief Pilot](#).
7. Anyone with recommended changes to this publication should contact the [Chief Pilot](#).

  
Orest Skrypuch  
Chief Pilot, UAL003  
United Virtual Airlines

## Introduction

Our goal, as always, is to get you flying just a little better. If you don't improve, then we have failed.

To that end, in assessing your checkride we will be looking for good general airmanship, and will provide in depth feedback to help you along.

Sometimes we ask that you re-fly the checkride, or give you a specific extra exercise, we do this to ensure that by the end of the process, you will indeed have improved. You should consider this a further opportunity to learn and improve.

In addition to this document, be sure to also consult the Aircrew Checkride Procedures Supplement (ACPS). The ACPS has a *effective* date and an *expiry* date, ensure that you are using the correct & applicable ACPS for your ride.

## Requirements Before Taking a Checkride

### ***Training Check Review (TCR)***

Before flying a checkride you may be required to pass a Training Check Review. This is a short written examination generated randomly from a question bank. The examination is open book. There is no limit to the number of times you may retake the exam, but you are limited in how often.

The exam is not difficult. The initial TCR will be based directly on information available from one of the major training documents listed below, or the Employee Manuals. Higher level TCRs may be required at later stages, and will draw on other readily available information for their questions.

Further specifics on the TCR, when and whether one is required, as well as the mechanics on how to sit the exam, are in the companion Aircrew Checkride Procedures Supplement (ACPS) document.

### ***Stage Check (SC)***

You must pass any required TCRs before attempting a Stage Check (SC) for a given Level.

Stage Checks (SC), if required for a given Level, will be flown before a full formal checkride may be submitted. This is not a ride where you will be exhaustively tested, in order to achieve a given grade. Its purpose is a review of where your flying is at. The checkpilot will give you some general instruction and comment, and point you to self-study resources that will help improve your flying.

Based on your submission the checkpilot will either recommend you to go ahead with a checkride, or will recommend further study and practice. You must have a positive recommendation on the respective SC, before you can proceed to the checkride.

The specifics of any required SCs are outlined in the companion Aircrew Checkride Procedures Supplement (ACPS).

## **Hours**

Pilots are reminded that they must be hours eligible, before they can take a checkride to move to the next Level. The specifics of the hours required for each Level are outlined in the ACPS.

## **Preparation**

You must carefully read through this document, before you attempt to fly your checkride. Be sure to *also* thoroughly read the following.

1. The companion Aircrew Checkride Procedures (ACPS) document, and ensure that you are referencing the ACPS that is current – check the effective & expiry date. The ACPS contains all the specifics of the checkrides for each level, and changes from time to time.
2. The NFDR (flight recorder) documentation. Note that this is now folded into the ACPS. The older separate Neusinger Flight Data Recorder documentation no longer applies, and is not to be referenced.
3. The thread in the Checkride Submission Forum “[Notes on Checkrides](#)”. You will always find the most current Checkride information posted there. There may indeed be critical updates there, that you need to know about.
4. The UVA Flight Training Primer, most all of the answers, all in one place! Download it from the [VHQTD page - Start HERE](#)
5. The ASOPS: look to the Flight Primer when you are learning, but for a quick reference as to the profiles we expect you to fly, see the Aircrew Standard Operating Procedures Supplement, also on the [VHQTD page](#)
6. And something that you truly cannot be without, the [UVA Flight Planning & Dispatch Tool \(FPD v2.5\)](#). Gives you fuel, weights & VSPEEDS, and now prints out a Dispatch Release. It will make planning this aspect of your checkride a snap, and really you should use it (or something equivalent) for every flight. The FPD functionality is now incorporated in the Pilot Center reservation system and FSACARS as well, but be sure to download the full toolkit and read through the documentation to fully understand how these numbers all work.
7. Proper use of VSPEEDS (V1, Vr, V2 & Vref and Vref corrected) is expected at all Levels. The Planner documentation fully explains what these speeds mean, how to use them, and the Planner calculates it for you with a few keystrokes.
8. The Checkride Flight Reports are standardized, and you will receive a report very similar to the format illustrated in Appendix C of the ACPS. Also included in that sample Report Card are notations for most items, indicating what we are expecting to see.
9. The other general resources available to you include the following.
  - a) The **Let's Have a Look** section. All visually based. Teaching pictures, videos and even sample flights flown by experienced pilots and recorded with the NFDR. Now you can see exactly what you should be doing while you are out there.

- b) The **Training Resource QuickList (TRO)**. This document keys by subject most of the resources we have available for you, including the items listed below. Great for when you want to quickly find something on a specific topic.
- c) The sticky messages in the key [Training Reference Section](#)
- d) Also start to review the voluminous messages in the [Flight Standards & Training Department](#) sections.
- e) The rest of the materials on the [VHQTD section of our website](#), especially the transcripts of the outstanding training sessions put on by Real World ATP's
- f) While there, be SURE to grab the [UVA Generic TurboJet checklist](#). You may find it useful even if you normally use other checklists. For sure it will help you avoid some common errors we see on the checkrides.

Then, practice, practice, practice! All of the above resources will help direct you.

If you do all that, the checkrides will be a breeze. But, if you don't spend the time in reading the documentation & preparing before the checkride, then you will likely be doing it after, for the next try.

If you are re-flying a checkride of stage check, unless your checkpilot specifically indicates otherwise, we expect a minimum of two weeks (14 days), and more typically longer between the issuing of a checkride report and a re-fly and resubmission of a checkride. That gives you time to study the report and to practice and hone your new skills.

For hints on an approach to re-flying a checkride, see the Flying or Re-flying a Checkride section below.

## **The Ride**

### ***Neusinger Flight Data Recorder (NFDR)***

#### **Preamble**

The Neusinger FDR was chosen as the recorder for UVA checkrides. It provides a complete examination of a flight, and as such allows for high quality feedback to pilots.

The other significant advantage of the recorder software is that you yourself can easily review (and should review) the checkride tape before submitting it. Also it is very valuable to do so later, once you have received your checkpilot comments and grading.

#### **Installation and Directions for Use**

The NFDR installation and directions for use are outlined in the ACPS.

## **Your Checkpilot**

After you post your message and the file submission is complete, if all is in order with your post as per the Checkride Posting guidelines (ACPS), a checkpilot will be assigned for your ride. At times there are more checkrides than checkpilots available, that will necessitate a wait for when one is free.

Very occasionally we are so overloaded that we have to declare a checkride “Gate Hold.” When we do, it will be announced in the Checkride Submission section. You may not submit checkrides while there is a gate hold in place, any such checkride submissions will be removed. You are free to fly a checkride during this time, but do not submit it until the gate hold is removed. All checkrides that have already been posted at the time the gate hold was imposed, will be assigned and graded.

Checkpilots can pick checkrides themselves if they have extra time. Any rides not picked by a checkpilot, will have one assigned – assignments are generally each Thursday. Usually the name and email address of your checkpilot will be posted in the thread, he will be your first point of contact.

Checkrides are not assigned or chosen on a precisely first come, first served basis.

The checkpilot will usually post to your thread as a reply, and may give an indication of when you might expect your ride to be reviewed. This is often within a few days, but might be a week or even longer if they are busy. Occasionally the rides need to be reassigned, and these will necessarily take more time to complete.

Some checkrides may take longer to be reviewed than others. Each is performed by a different checkpilot with a different schedule and different RW commitments. Again, do not expect a precise first come, first served process.

Once your checkride post is complete and approved, then if you do not hear anything about your ride within seven days of a checkpilot assignment, please email the checkpilot directly. If his email was not noted or he does not reply, then post a reply in your thread requesting the status.

**Please do not post messages asking why your checkride is not done before this time, it needlessly wastes our time replying to these.**

Typically, once a checkride post is complete and properly posted, the checkride assignment, grading and promotion if applicable should be complete within two weeks. It is usually sooner rather than later, but of course sometimes it may take longer if circumstances dictate.

Our checkpilots may be highly paid professionals, but they are not on UVA's payroll! The volunteer staff here thanks you for your patience.

For questions on your checkride, please append a reply to your checkride posting, or contact your assigned checkpilot directly by email.

Should your ride need to be reflown, often it will be reassigned to the same checkpilot. If you are refllying a checkride you should so indicate in the submission.

If you need to refly a checkride, you may not resubmit for at least two weeks. You need to spend some time to learn and practice, follow the tips given in the report. For some hints on refllying a checkride see the *Flying or ReFlying a Checkride* section below.

# Checkride Philosophy & Grading

## ***Purpose***

The primary purpose of checkrides is to facilitate education and improve flying. They are not meant to be regulatory, or onerous, there is no danger of you losing your job! We hope that you will find them a positive experience, in the real world this type of teaching would cost you dearly. Certainly, the majority of our pilots that have journeyed through the program before you, echo that it was very educational and valuable.

## ***Principles***

Checkrides, regardless of Level, are marked on the same elements, and with the same set of standards, however each Level checkride has a different level of achievement expected.

We use the principle of progressively increasing difficulty as we go through the Levels. Now, in real life, flying an RJ around with 50 passengers is just as serious as flying a 747, but for our purposes we apply significant leeway in the entry-level stages. Higher Levels take more skill and facility to succeed at. We expect you to embody and learn the lessons early on, and apply these skills with continually greater finesse as you proceed.

Checkpilots work from guidelines, but there are always gray areas where they have to use discretion. They sometimes consult on a checkride with their colleagues. Also, checkride reports are always circulated within the department, to facilitate quality control and to help ensure a uniform approach.

## ***Constituent Errors***

Checkrides will have specific defined aspects that the pilot must include/complete, these are the constituent elements, and are explicitly outlined in the ACPS. For example the flight route, time of departure, weather settings, or when the autopilot is allowed for use. If you are required to fly to JFK, but instead make a perfect landing at LGA, you will be required to fly the checkride over. If you do not use a valid route, you will have to fly it again. Similarly if you are not to engage the autopilot until 5000ft, and you engage it at 1000ft, this will also require a re-fly. Review the checkride description in the ACPS carefully, to ensure you catch all of these items.

## ***General Errors***

Each checkride description outlines the expectations for the ride. Where you fall short, we will note how using descriptive terms. We break up these errors into catastrophic, critical and technical.

## ***Catastrophic Error***

Something that was imminent, or has caused damage, to the aircraft or passengers or others is called a catastrophic error. Although not all inclusive, examples of catastrophic errors are missing the runway, “landing” at a descent vertical speed of more than 500 fpm, landing much too fast and bouncing a few times on the runway, stalling or almost stalling on takeoff or during climb, or striking the tarmac or other objects with some part of the aircraft. A catastrophic error, at all levels, will always result in the need for further study, practice and a resubmission.

## **Critical Error**

Anything that could seriously endanger the aircraft or passengers is a critical error. Examples would include an unstable approach, violating minimum IFR altitudes, a non-emergency landing with less than FAR required reserve fuel (a planning error), or flying below minimum flap maneuvering speed. Critical errors become important as soon as you start to progress in your career.

## **Technical Error**

The rest of the errors, are labeled technical errors. This is certainly the largest group, and only becomes important at the higher Levels. To succeed at the highest Levels, you are allowed only a minimum of technical errors.

You will see in your report all of the observations we have made, comments and errors. Even though a certain error may not have held you back at a lower Level, you need to correct this. Not only will this get you flying correctly, but it is likely to become an issue in the future, at higher Level checkrides.

## **Results**

You will receive by email an analysis of your checkride, and a grade. The exact format of the report for formal checkrides is duplicated in ACPS Appendix C.

The grade will be one of:

*“Checkride Above Standard - Passed With Honors”*

*“Checkride At Standard – Passed”*

*“Checkride Below Standard - Repeat Required”*

Pilots with *Checkride Above Standard* demonstrated above average performance in virtually all aspects. This is seldom seen, and something to shoot for!

If the checkride is graded as *Below Standard* your first time (or even a second or third time), take heart, especially at a senior level you are by no means alone. Just think of it as an opportunity to learn something new! The real purpose of checkrides is to motivate you to continually improve your flying skills.

If your checkride is below standard you will need to repeat the checkride, you will get specific suggestions on what to do differently. You may also be given a special assignment that will help develop and test a specific area for improvement. Occasionally a Stage Check may be recommended before you resubmit a checkride.

We are going to do everything we can to get you to fly even better, and to help you succeed!

## **Other Notes**

### ***Flying or Reflying a Checkride, General Tips***

Hopefully you are reading this before actually flying your checkride, as you are supposed to! If you have been asked to refly the checkride, the below goes doubly for you.

## ReFlying

It is not at all uncommon to be requested to repeat a checkride, especially at higher Levels. If you have been asked to re-fly a checkride what you need to do, is not get yourself down about it. Checkrides are all about learning something new, you now have yet another opportunity to do this.

If you are re-flying a checkride, check that the ACPS release you based your ride on is still valid at the time that you plan to resubmit it. If there is a new ACPS release then you must use the equivalent checkride as outlined in the new release ACPS for your submission. Not doing so, will mean an automatic rejection of your submission.

If you are re-flying the checkride, here is an extra step to do. You need to actually view the flight you submitted for your checkride, with the same recorder you used to record it. As you watch it, have the checkride report that your checkpilot put together, and review each point that he makes. This was a report that was custom put together for your ride. Ensure that you understand the points he is trying to make. If you don't, then ask for more details or an explanation. The checkpilot will no doubt be happy to oblige. If you don't understand some technical issues, also feel free to post questions in the Training & Checkrides section.

If you are re-flying the ride, sometimes you might be sent a sample flight by the checkPilot, with a takeoff and landing. View it! That is what you want to emulate. The Let's Have a Look forum section has many recorded example flights for review as well.

## Flying or ReFlying

Whether flying for the first time, or re-flying a checkride, the next thing to do is to review the Preparation section (again). It lists all the spots you can go to gather information. It is all really laid out in front of you, like on a silver platter. Even if you exhaustively read everything, it wouldn't likely take you more than a few hours. The key items to concentrate on are the UVA Flight Primer, and the ASOPS, both on the VHQTD page.

Once you have made an initial perusal of the information, you want to make use of it. The very best way to practice with any aircraft, is to fly practice patterns. Have a look at the Pattern Practice page in the Primer, and the sticky message Pattern Practice is Good. *The Approach* transcript also steps you through this nicely, although it doesn't cover the takeoff.

Now, here is the trick. Record your pattern practice, and play it back, rewind, fast-forward, slow motion, pause it, change views, all with a critical eye. The NFDR is a fantastic tool not only for the checkpilot, but for you too. From your reading you are getting an idea of what you should be seeing, ensure that you are actually executing this.

DO NOT bother (re)flying the checkride right away, even as a practice, until you are solid in your practice patterns. That may take a while, or it might not.

So, #1 gather the information, #2 execute/practice the techniques, #3 review and see if you got it right, then loop back to #1 or #2 again, as required.

Once you think you are ready, give the checkride a try – but don't actually submit it – instead review it yourself! Do you think it makes the grade? If not, keep practicing, if you think it meets the mark then send it along.

If re-flying the checkride, do not resubmit checkrides in rapid fire hoping to get the dart closer by luck. Apply yourself, improve your flying, then submit the re-fly when you really are ready.

Unless your checkpilot specifically indicates otherwise, we expect a minimum of two weeks (14 days), and more typically longer, between the issuing of a checkride report, and a re-fly and resubmit of a checkride.

## ***Time and Weather***

When there is a time specified to fly a checkride, then you need to have that time set in FS. That can be achieved by:

1. Flying it actually at that real time (hard to do with our personal schedules I expect), or
2. Just setting the FS time to match the time required for the Checkride.

If there is no requirement in the ACPS for specific weather, you may fly with weather cleared, you may fly with real time weather, you may fly with archived weather, you may even fly with imaginary weather – what you do in this regard will have no bearing on the grading. However there are two stipulations:

1. The weather you experience in FS must meet the minimums required for your takeoff & landing.
2. You need to specify in the checkride submission what that weather was during your checkride. METAR format for the weather note is strongly preferred, even if the METAR string is partial or incomplete.

Where your FS time is not actual real time, and you are using real time weather, there will obviously be a disconnect. However, this is not contrary to the checkride documentation, and perfectly legal to do. It may be preferred to try to get these matched up, but that is completely optional. Some folks may not even have the software to be able to do that even if they wanted to.

However, to avoid any confusion on the part of the checkride staff, it is recommended noting why the METAR time does not match the time of your flight your submission. This can arise for a number of reasons, given the foregoing discussion.

Also note that for some checkrides there may be certain weather and/or time requirements, double check the ACPS.

## ***Air Traffic Control (ATC)***

Unfortunately, all ATC is not created equally in the flight simulator world and understanding the strengths and weaknesses of these options is important to safe flying. The list below outlines the major choices. As PIC, it is important to understand that you will be held accountable for the conduct of your flight. Certainly one element is the routing of the flight. If you accept the directions and instructions of “poor” quality ATC, your checkride grade will have to negatively reflect that.

## **VATSIM**

VATSIM is without question the best ATC available to the community. It models real world ATC including departure and arrival procedures, obstacle avoidance and more. That is not to say that it is not without its downside. Centers aren't always manned, not all pilots have access to a

good internet connection and controller's experience levels vary just like ours. It is important to remember, just as in the real world, that you must be double checking the controller's work and clarifying anything that you think may be contrary to aircraft safety.

With all that said, when you get a good group of controllers together manning a full ARTCC center, it is one heck of an experience, and provides the very best scenario for flying a successful checkride flight.

### **MSFS Default ATC**

The weakest ATC of the bunch. Most would agree that no ATC at all is better. MSFS ATC is ignorant of SIDs, STARs, normal airport runway usage and obstacle/terrain avoidance. The first three points could be overlooked, as their vectors do get you to the runway and they generally point you into the wind. However, the complete ignorance of terrain avoidance is a problem. MSFS ATC's tendency to violate safe terrain clearance altitudes, and worse yet to fly you into mountains requires a very skeptical view of descent and approach instructions. On a checkride you are certainly responsible for proper terrain avoidance – when using MSFS Default ATC consider yourself pretty much on your own.

### **Radar Contact**

This is a step up from Default ATC, but users will vary in their view as to how big a step up it is. It is also important to point out that it requires proper setup beyond what many users are aware of. Without proper adjustment of minimum altitudes and other factors, it can leave you in the same boat as Default ATC.

For those who are proficient to the task and do take the time to set it up, it really is a big step up. It can be a good alternative, if you are unable to use VATSIM. However, blanket statements indicating that RC is safe ATC are problematic, as so much depends on proper configuration.

### ***Minimum IFR Altitude***

As your flight progresses, you are obligated to fly above a large variety of invisible planes, which guarantee terrain and obstacle avoidance as well as navigational beacon and ATC radio reception. These start as you leave the runway, navigate the departure (see the SID), fly enroute (navigational charts: MEA/MOCA/AMA), and then on the descent (STAR) and finally on the runway approach (IAP). Each phase carries with it a number of minimum IFR altitudes for specific segments that you must remain above.

You will find one such minimum altitude, the MSA, as a circle graphic on instrument approach procedure (IAP) plates. Seldom on a real world IFR flight would you be concerned with the MSA. The exceptions being if you were in a non-radar environment, or for communications failure. That said, the MSA is still something to keep an eye on to double check ATC instructions.

Unfortunately in our simulated world you will often be without ATC, or at least without reliable ATC, even on an IFR flight in controlled airspace. Unless you are lucky enough to have a direct feeder route joining the enroute with the instrument approach phases, in the absence of good quality ATC you will need to fall back on the terrain protection planning that MSA altitudes provide you. Some checkride setups may help by providing you with specific directions to help bridge this awkward situation. If there are such directions, then be sure you execute them.

ATC has available to them (only seen on VATSIM) Minimum Vectoring Altitudes (MVA). These allow for “more room” and hence flexibility, along specific tracks. But you, as a pilot, do not have access to these.

Without reliable ATC, to get you safely down to the ground (at a minimum), you need to respect the MEA along the airways, then respect the MSA until joining the Instrument Approach Procedure entry point (Initial Approach Fix or IAF). Once past the IAF, and on the published approach procedure, you will refer to the charted approach minimums. You need to stay above the Final Approach Fix (FAF) altitude until you pass it, and then finally you descend to land.

Respecting the minimums, does not necessarily mean flying at the minimum, you just need to be above them. But, as you get closer to landing, these minimums can become the altitude you should be flying at, it depends a great deal on the type of approach. Now, if you have reliable ATC, you may actually be cleared to below these, down to the controller only available minimum vectoring altitudes (MVA).

On a checkride, if you are vectoring yourself, you need to be very purposeful in maintaining a safe altitude, including respecting the MSA if there is no other route for transitioning from the enroute/descent environment to the instrument approach.

## ***The Final Approach***

*Some checkride segments may specify otherwise, please read the ACPS documentation carefully, but unless specifically stated otherwise consider the following as directive.*

For checkrides autolands are prohibited. Therefore you will always have a visual segment during the approach & landing. This obviously restricts your flying to weather conditions that are no worse than Category I for precision approaches, that is a visibility (RVR) of 2400ft with a decision height (DH) of 200ft. If flying a non-precision approach, then of course the conditions must be even better.

Unless otherwise specified, you are free to fly your checkride in whatever weather you like, actual, archived, or custom. *But, regardless of the actual weather*, if not otherwise specified checkride landings are to be flown with instrument approach procedures (IAP), generally an ILS approach down to the decision altitude (DA), typically 200ft above the runway. You then switch to “heads up” visual flight and land.

Where weather minimums allow, and when available for the landing runway, non-precision instrument approaches such LDA, LOC or VOR/DME are permitted as well. Similarly you will be expected to fly on instruments down to the minimum descent altitude (MDA), and then switch to “heads up” visual flight and land.

While on the approach we expect you to track the instrument guidance system you are using, to the standards specified in the ASOPS. This is not to suggest that you should wear virtual goggles, or otherwise obstruct your view of the outside environment before this time, but simply that we expect your aircraft to track a path consistent with the instrument approach you are flying.

Once you start the visual segment, instrument guidance (VOR or localizer & glideslope) becomes supplementary rather than primary, you are then principally guided by the view out the window.

But no matter what segment of the approach, including during the visual segment, you need to rely on and crosscheck all resources as available, to ensure that you are flying a correct and safe profile. For more information on weather minimums for approaches see the ASOPS.