

## Routes to the JAA Flight Deck - Irv Lee ([www.higherplane.flyer.co.uk](http://www.higherplane.flyer.co.uk))

Here's my advice showing the different routes available to get to the stage of interview for a flight crew job with a UK or European airline. If any terms confuse early on, try my abbreviations page: [www.higherplane.flyer.co.uk/abbrev.htm](http://www.higherplane.flyer.co.uk/abbrev.htm)

Also see my site for South African qualified pilots in the UK - it has a questions and answers page: [www.uksa.flyer.co.uk](http://www.uksa.flyer.co.uk)

### Disclaimer:

The info below is based on the UK rules and interpretations of JAA. All advice offered is merely 'in my opinion' and a basis for talking to schools and authorities, and of course things can alter whilst you are gaining your licences!

### Understanding the Licence Situation

The first thing to realise is that the path to commercial jobs is and always have been 'difficult' and expensive, but everyone that gets there says it's all worth while! Also, there are strange outdated 'trade protection' type rules where you need a European licence to fly commercially in European aircraft (JAA land), an American licence (FAA land) for commercial work in American aircraft, a SA licence for S. African work, etc etc.

Hearing that, people wonder therefore how a SA pilot flies an aircraft from Jo'berg to London and back again as this appears to be 'flying in Europe'. The answer lies in the registration of the aircraft. A SA registered aircraft needs SA qualified pilots and can then fly anywhere, an American aircraft needs FAA qualified pilots and can then fly anywhere, and European and UK aircraft need JAA licences and can then fly anywhere. So its not actually WHERE you fly that means you need a JAA licence, it's the fact that you want to work for Euro or UK airlines which will be Euro registered.

### What is Needed for an Airline Interview

Normally, to fly commercially here (UK) on UK/Euro scheduled airlines, you would only apply for interview for a co-pilot job when you had:

1- what is often called a "**frozen JAA ATPL**": technically the term is outmoded nowadays but still used. This means you would actually already have a JAA CPL (Commercial Pilots licence) in your hand, but you would have passed all ground exams for the ATPL (Air Transport Pilots Licence) - **but** you have not yet got the 'experience' and hours to actually have it. The ATPL is therefore termed 'frozen' until your hours and commercial experience build up. The airline can employ you as a co-pilot, knowing that your hours and experience will naturally grow to ATPL level, at which time you can get the ATPL and then get promoted as Captain - a captain needs an ATPL on scheduled airlines.

2- A **JAA Instrument Rating. JAA/IR** This allows flight in all classes of airspace all over the world in all weathers. This will be the most expensive course of the whole series of courses.

3- A **Class One JAA medical** - if you are only learning to fly to become a Commercial pilot, usually it's worth getting the commercial medical as the very first step even if initially you won't need it - there's no point in starting if you have some medical reason that will disqualify you - it doesn't usually happen, but why waste any money on learning if you only want to fly airliners yet can't for a medical reasons only discovered on your first medical examination?

4- A **JAA MCC course** - (multi crew co-operation course teaches you how to work the cockpit as a team with the captain rather than at each others throats)

(Some very small airlines might want you to have a 'type' rating - i.e.: experience on the type of aircraft to be used - bigger airlines might train you onto the new type yourself. Having a commercial job to fly a 747 requires a 747 'type rating'). For example, a small airline might offer you a job subject to a '737 type rating'. You would have to pay for that, and it costs many thousands of pounds, but you would be doing it with a job offer subject to it. A large airline might put you through a 737 rating course but lower your starting salary for the first two or three years to pay for it.

Jobs are always difficult - always have been! But if no-one tried, no-one would get anywhere. The UK regional airlines here seem to interview candidates between 22 and 36 years old at the moment. There are of course quite a few experienced pilots looking for work, but newer ones still do get jobs as they want less pay! Conditions and benefits always suffer too when it's an employers' market.

Most UK commercial airlines I believe would only be interested in you having the correct JAA licences, medicals, etc, NOT what route you took to get them. The really big one (i.e.: BA) do like to take people off the "zero to ATPL" JAA courses at schools they know, but they do now look at some modular school's pupils.

'Work' is also supposedly available with just a JAA CPL and I/R with CPL ground exams but not with main airlines - the jobs would be cargo or air taxi, but of course, with lesser requirements, you have to be VERY lucky to get one, so assume you will need the JAA ATPL exams!

#### What You do NOT Need:

You also have to be careful that any past convictions in mis-spent youth don't ban you from either USA entry visa requirements (for when you are working) and also from getting an airport security pass - previous convictions may prevent this and no-one will employ you with any dodgy background.

#### Learning in South Africa

If you only have a SA CPL or SA ATPL with Instrument rating, you could then be employed in SA or any minor country which recognises the SA CPL as 'theirs' (subject to work visas). To work in many European JAA countries with European airline companies, you eventually need a JAA commercial licence to be employed (see previous list). However, getting that far by going via SA licences is one way very viable of getting there - see route '3' in the list of possibilities below.

Having a SA Commercial CPL licence won't be much good for jobs in Europe immediately BUT it is NOT a dead end - it does buy you credit on the JAA courses to get JAA licences - one benefit of the SA route is the price, another is the speed you can get through things in the better climate - for example, hours building. It's good experience too, but you still have to convert SA to JAA qualifications when you return if you want to be employed in the UK.

### **Payments:**

Main advice on ANY school ANYWHERE - don't pay agents or you'll be disappointed when you see the real prices when you get there, and only pay minimum up front. Be suspicious if asked to pay an awful lot in advance - but what is a reasonable amount? Obviously a school needs some deposit as they are reserving a place for you and maybe accommodation. But the MORE demanded in advance in comparison to 'deposits' required for the same course at other schools, the more suspicious you should be. High discounts for high pre-payment is a warning bell! This applies in the UK, USA, SA, anywhere. Find out what other schools would want as a deposit for the same course.

### **The Routes to the Commercial Licences and Ratings:**

If any terms confuse, try my abbreviations page: <http://www.higherplane.flyer.co.uk/abbrev.htm>

To get a JAA commercial CPL (and maybe frozen ATPL) and I/R, there are 3 basic ways:

1- **Direct** - start with zero hours and about £60000+ and sit in somewhere like the UK or Spain at a JAA flying college for 13 - 15 months. You exit without £60000+ but have a JAA CPL/IR (with frozen ATPL) if you complete ok. You hardly need to know how it works- it's like being at a flying college on a conveyor belt - you are given a lesson timetable and you're driven through everything - if you can pass all the checkpoints.

2- **Modular through a PPL**. Start from zero or with a PPL from any country and take modular steps over time. This means you could start the JAA CPL flight course with a SA PPL. You usually need a minimum 150 hours and any country's PPL to START the JAA modular CPL course. So one way, taking into account UK weather and costs, is to do a PPL and hours building at somewhere like S.A., then start the JAA CPL modular course somewhere that does JAA training - usually, but not necessarily, in the UK, it can also be abroad. If you take into account the time and cost it would take you to do 150 hours in the UK to start the JAA CPL flight course, you can see why it's worth doing all the preliminary stuff in SA and starting the JAA route at 150 hours with a foreign licence.

3- **Modular from a foreign CPL/I.R.** Get a foreign CPL and Instrument rating. The amount of JAA ground training to convert is then 'assessed' by your JAA ground school to decide how much you need, but whatever they say you need as training, you must also pass the CPL or ATPL ground exams in total i.e.: the SA CPL or ATPL ground exams do not exempt you from the JAA CPL or ATPL ground exams, just some training towards them. Same with the flying course - having the SA CPL means you do not have to do all the 25 hour flying course, it is 'assessed' but you always do have to pass the flying test. The SA instrument rating is worth quite a bit of credit towards our JAA instrument rating flying course but you will still have to do at least 15 hours of it, but at least that is better than the normal 50 hours.

A JAA CPL/I.R. is the absolute minimum you need for real commercial flying here, but even then the normal airlines would not be interested until you had the ATPL exams done (the difference between ATPL and CPL is mainly in the ground exams and experience). So for airlines you need the JAA CPL/IR with ATPL (not CPL) ground exams passed.

Unfortunately you do NOT get any credit for an SA ground exam passes if you want a JAA ATPL. You need to do the full ground ATPL course for that. Don't feel hard done by - even if you had JAA CPL ground school exams there is no upgrade, you would still have to do the full ATPL ground school course! So if your ultimate goal is 'JAA' there is no need to do a SA ATPL/IR - you get as much credit for having a SA CPL/IR. If your ambition is a JAA ATPL and I/R then a good route might be a SA CPL/IR, then the JAA conversion (ATPL ground school, CPL and I/R flight conversion training and test)

### **Costs:**

All guesstimates - and assume you arrive back from SA with a SA PPL and the hours building done, or with a SA CPL with I/R:

**JAA ATPL ground school and exams** : Expect to pay a low 4 figure sum - see adverts around.

**JAA CPL Flight Course:** If you have a SA PPL, then JAA CPL flight course is normally 25 hours and I would guess about £5k - £6K. Of course you would not need to do anything like the full course if you already had a SA CPL - how much depends on your school assessment. Guess 5 or 6 hours instead of 25 - you need to get used to UK countryside and airspace for the visual navigation bit, and remember to add about £1000 on for the test itself and licence issue assuming they are not included in the course fee.

**JAA Instrument Rating:** The JAA I/R must be £10K at least for a full 50 hours course if you didn't have a SA I/R. BUT you get a lot of credit for a foreign I/R say about two thirds credit so that should mean £3k to £4k if you had a SA I/R already. For the airlines you also need a Crew Co-operation Course - not sure but presumably a few hundred or low 4 figure.

**General Advice:** - If you only want to be a commercial pilot or nothing, make sure you can pass the Commercial medical before spending much money training. Whomever you train with - it doesn't matter which country or which school, never pay much up front in any part of the world, and paying agents is only going to cost more and possibly give you problems if things go wrong if you have not been dealing with the school directly.

When you eventually get back to the UK, the same applies - never give a UK school or ground college too much in advance - even the 'safest' can go into receivership at the drop of a hat - its a very knife-edge business - one of the oldest flying clubs in the country recently got into trouble. If you do pay anything at all up front, the usual advice when dealing with UK schools is to pay on a UK credit card to get the protection under UK credit card law. 'Paying as you go' also keeps any school on their toes - some schools have been known to 'slacken off' once they have a large amount on account.