



FLIGHT PLAN VALIDATION

1. Introduction

When operating an active air/ground traffic control position, one of your tasks is the flight plan check of all aircraft under your responsibility.

The flight plan check is very important on initial contact to be sure that the pilot has not made mistakes in it, will respect current valid routes and will respect local regulations in function of the selected flight rules.

Every flight plan must follow the IVAO general rules and regulations.

2. Flight plan validation: how?

There are two options for a flight plan validation:

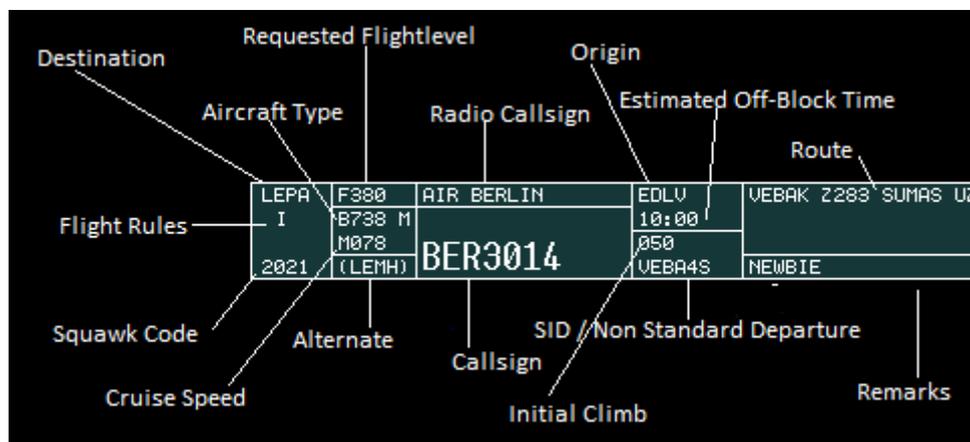
- First validation is a simple verification of the flight strip available in IvAc
- Second validation is full flight plan verification by opening the ICAO format flight plan

The flight strip validation is the required minimum for any active air traffic controller in IVAO

2.1. Flight strip validation

The flight strip is the main tool for the ATC to know what the intentions of the aircraft are (via the FPL: route, FL, speed...) and what has been cleared by the (adjacent) ATC unit. So knowing how to use it and its meanings is very important for a good control management.

The figure below shows a typical flight strip that any controller shall know and understand.



The basic checks of the flight strip are:

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- Check of the departure and the arrival airfield ICAO code
- Check the alternate airfield compatible with arrival and departure
- Check the first cruise altitude selected in function of route restriction or semi-circular rules of levels.
- Check aircraft type in function of type of flight rules selected or information given by the pilot
- Check the Flight rules of the flight in function of the route and altitude/flight level selected
- Check squawk code in function of transponder number given in the clearance
- Check route in function of departure airfield and arrival airfield and flight rules selected
- Check cruising speed estimated. This speed is the true air speed.
- Check off-block time when necessary
- Check Remarks area when necessary

2.2. Full flight plan validation

Apart from the flight strip you can also view a complete ICAO format flight plan of an aircraft.

In IvAc, Right-click the label and select 'Show FPL' from the menu (or press F6 when call sign selected)

The screenshot shows the 'ACARS - ICAO International Flight Plan' window. It features a title bar with the text 'ACARS - ICAO International Flight Plan' and a close button. The main window title is 'International Flight Plan'. The form is organized into several sections, each with a label and a set of input fields or buttons. The sections are:

- 7 aircraft ident.:** A text input field.
- 8 flight rules:** A dropdown menu.
- type of flight:** A dropdown menu.
- 9 number:** A dropdown menu.
- type of aircraft:** A dropdown menu.
- wake turbulence cat.:** A dropdown menu.
- 10 equipment:** A dropdown menu.
- 13 departure aerodrome:** A text input field.
- departure time:** A text input field.
- 15 cruising speed:** A dropdown menu.
- level:** A dropdown menu.
- route:** A large text input field.
- 16 destination aerodrome:** A text input field.
- total EET:** A text input field.
- altn aerodrome:** A text input field.
- other information:** A text input field.
- supplementary information:** A section containing:
 - 19 endurance:** A text input field.
 - persons on board:** A text input field.
 - pilot in command:** A text input field.
 - aircraft color and markings (MTL):** A dropdown menu.

 At the bottom of the window, there are five buttons: 'Load...', 'Save...', 'Reset', 'Send FPL', and 'Cancel'. The ICAO logo is visible in the top right corner of the window.

This window can also be opened from the I/O window by double-clicking the corresponding line or right click the line and select 'Show FPL'. Now you get the ICAO FPL window.

The basic checks are the same for both the flight strip validation and the ICAO flight plan validation plus the supplementary information checks.

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2.1. Editing a flight Plan

As an active ATC with rating ADC or above, you are able to change some fields in a flight plan as filed by a pilot.

But be advised that the FPL is a pilot's responsibility; that's why you may use this feature for training reasons only. If you wish an update of the Flight Plan in any other cases, you may advise the pilot – he has to change it.

The flight plan can be changed to help new members to understand how to do it.

3. Basic mistakes in a flight plan

3.1. Check of the departure and the arrival airfield ICAO code

The controller shall pay attention to these fields for a departing aircraft. It is possible that pilots leave the last departure and destination airfields or other data saved from previous flights in their flight plans.

It is mandatory for a controller to inform the pilot that he has to correct these fields.

Pilot shall not select ZZZZ as departure or destination airfield except if this airfield selected has no known ICAO code. ZZZZ shall not be selected for no specific destination.

3.2. Check the alternate airfield compatible with arrival and departure

The controller shall pay attention to this field for a departing aircraft. It is possible that pilots leave the last alternate airfield or other data saved from previous flights in their flight plans.

It is mandatory for a controller to inform the pilot that he has to correct this field.

Pilot shall not select ZZZZ as an alternate airfield. If the Pilot does not want an alternate, he shall leave this field blank. ZZZZ means this airfield selected has no known ICAO code.

3.3. Check the requested flight level or first cruise altitude

The requested flight level given in the flight plan is the first en-route cruise flight level. Other levels can be shown in the route.

This level shall be checked with the route parity when published or the semicircular rules of level in the air traffic controller's airspace.

It is mandatory for a controller to inform the pilot that he has to correct this field. You can also propose a possible solution to fulfill the regulation.

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3.4. Check aircraft type

Sometimes the pilot doesn't know the ICAO code of his aircraft or he forgets to update this field from a previous flight. If you detect a false aircraft, please tell the pilot to confirm the exact aircraft he uses.

It is mandatory for a controller to inform the pilot that he has to correct this field. You can also help this pilot to get the right ICAO code of his aircraft.

3.5. Check the Flight rules

Sometimes the pilot forgets to update this mandatory field.

Typical mistakes are:

- Flight rules are IFR but flight plan is VFR
- Flight rules are VFR but flight plan is IFR

It is mandatory for a controller to inform the pilot that he has to correct this field.

3.6. Check cruising speed estimated

This speed must be the true air speed at the first requested flight level.

Typical mistakes are:

- Speed given is the indicated airspeed and not the true air speed
- Speed unit is 'K' for km per hour and not 'N' for knots.

It is mandatory for a controller to inform the pilot that he has to correct this field.

3.7. Check squawk/transponder code

Sometimes the pilot forgets to update the squawk/transponder code or sets a wrong squawk code.

Air traffic controller can remind him to set the right code

3.8. Check route

The controller shall pay attention to this field for a departing aircraft. It is possible that pilots leave the last route used in a previous flight in their flight plans.

The controller also shall detect:

- Incorrect first en-route point not compatible with the standard departure charts
- Incorrect last en-route point not compatible with the arrival charts
- Not operational first en-route point in function of the route and departure airfield selected
- Not operational last en-route point in function of the route and destination airfield selected
- Incorrect en-route progressive points or route

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4. Flight plan validation: where and when?

The flight plan check is mandatory when doing the departure clearance on ground.

As first controller, you need to be sure that the flight plan is correct from your point of view by checking the different flight plan fields.

ATC unit shall not ask flight plan modification during critical phases of flight (landing, take-off, final approach, emergency...).

4.1. For delivery controller

The delivery controller communicates with IFR pilots only .

He can display the flight plan and check it before the initial contact in order to check the flight plan.

If he finds any mistake, during the first contact with the aircraft, he must obtain the correction of the current flight plan before delivering any departure clearance to this pilot.

When the flight plan seems to be correct, the delivery controller can give the IFR departure clearance.

4.2. For ground controller

The ground controller shall follow the tasks of the delivery controller if this position is not opened.

In addition, the ground controller shall check VFR flight plan with same manner as IFR flight plan.

For arrival aircraft, on ground, it is not necessary to check the flight plan as the aircraft will leave.

4.3. For tower controller

The tower controller shall perform the tasks of the delivery and ground controllers if these positions are not opened.

In addition, the tower controller shall verify the flight plan from incoming traffic from a non-controlled area.

A controller will never ask for a flight plan modification when an aircraft is in final approach or in preparation for landing.

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4.4. For approach controller (arrival and departure)

The approach controllers shall follow the tower, ground and delivery of their controlled airfield only in their area of responsibility.

Approach controllers shall pay special attention to traffic coming from non-controlled areas or traffic on ground requesting clearance with no ground, tower or delivery active controller on his airfield.

4.5. For en-route controller

En-route controller shall check incoming traffic flight plans of pilots coming:

- From outside his controlled area, especially when aircraft is coming from non-controlled areas
- From a departing airfield inside or below his controlled area

En-route controllers shall pay special attention to traffic coming from non-controlled areas or traffic on ground requesting clearance with no ground, tower or delivery active controller on his airfield.

En-route controller shall also verify the adequate information given in the route in the flight plan and the current route availabilities and the usual known rules inside his airspace.

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