

VATSIM

Pilot Training Department

Authorized Training Organization

Policies and Procedures Handbook

Version 1.0

1. Preface

1.1 Introductory remarks

From its founding in 2001, the Virtual Air Traffic Simulation Network (VATSIM) has provided flight simulation enthusiasts a remarkably immersive online experience. With approximately 30,000 active participants, VATSIM has always emphasized the importance of providing quality training to its ATC controllers. In 2009, that commitment to training was extended through a strictly voluntary program of pilot ratings that provided those individuals with the opportunity to train online and demonstrate their skills at increasing levels of specialization and proficiency. As of the spring of 2013, about 2,000 such ratings have been issued by Authorized Training Organizations, third-party partners that have been authorized by VATSIM to provide such online training to its members.

1.2 Purpose and scope

This handbook sets forth the policies and procedures under which the Pilot Training Department, led by the Vice President Pilot Training (a member of the VATSIM Board of Governors) administers the voluntary VATSIM pilot rating system in partnership with a network of Authorized Training Organizations. Most of this material has previously been available online in the web pages of the Pilot Training Department on www.vatsim.net. The intent of this handbook is to bring those policies together in one document, eliminating unnecessary duplication, enhancing consistency, and providing clarity for both students and trainers. Corrections and suggestions concerning this manual should be directed to vpplt@vatsim.net.

1.3 Relevant VATSIM policies

All activity on the VATSIM network is subject to VATSIM policies, codes and agreements, including, but not limited to, the Code of Regulations (CoR), Code of Conduct (CoC), User Agreement (UA), and Privacy Policy.

1.4 Revision history

0.1	05/2013	Original draft
0.2	05/2013	Review draft (many minor corrections, added New ATO section)
0.3	06/2013	Consultation draft (corrections, clarifications, CFI ratings, prereqs, standards removed to separate doc, new section 2.6)
1.0	06/2013	Release version with many minor corrections and clarifications, clarification of non-partner VA/VSO activities as ATO

2. VATSIM Pilot Training Department

The Pilot Training Department of VATSIM (PTD) operates under the direction of the Vice President Pilot Training (VPPLT, VATGOV14). Unless otherwise stated herein, reference to the Vice President Pilot Training shall also encompass his/her designees.

2.1 Mission and goals

The mission of VATSIM can well be described in terms of the following quotation taken from the preamble to its *Code of Conduct*:

VATSIM is an online community created for enthusiasts of flight simulation and air traffic control. One of the main goals of VATSIM is to create an environment which is fun and, at the same time, educational and a realistic simulation of procedures followed by pilots and air traffic controllers everyday around the world.

The PTD is responsible for creating effective access to efficient, scalable, and sustainable training opportunities for VATSIM's pilots. In partnership with Authorized Training Organizations (ATOs), the department supervises VATSIM pilot certification programs that enhance pilot and controller satisfaction with their online experiences, thereby increasing participant recruitment and retention by the VATSIM community.

2.2 Role of VPPLT and PTD

The Board of Governors (BoG) is the governing body for all VATSIM rules and regulations. That board has delegated to VPPLT the authority to govern and regulate its pilot training program. VPPLT acts on behalf of the BoG in all matters pertaining to that program. The actions of VPPLT can only be superseded by a vote of the BoG members meeting all governance guidelines set forth in the VATSIM Code of Regulations.

VPPLT and PTD have responsibility for the following:

- Promote the training of VATSIM pilots at all levels of experience using both internal and qualified third party (ATO) resources;
- Govern and regulate ATO requirements, as well as ATO certification and re-certification;
- Design, implement, and maintain the VATSIM Pilot Training and Certification system;
- Conduct periodic reviews and audits to ensure the quality of all VATSIM training activities; and
- Provide a global platform of pilot recognition for having achieved demonstrated skill in online aviation at different levels in a voluntary program.

2.3 Authorized Training Organizations

Training of VATSIM pilots is carried out by Authorized Training Organizations (ATO) that are certified by VPPLT. Pilots successfully completing an ATO training program are awarded the pilot rating associated with that program. The pilot ratings currently recognized by VATSIM and their associated standards are listed in Authorized Training Organization Pilot Rating Standards.

2.3.1 Definitions

An **Authorized Training Organization** is certified by VATSIM's VP Pilot Training to issue specific pilot ratings. Multiple ratings may be authorized in a single application, but only if specifically requested and granted. ATOs may choose to offer only select VATSIM pilot ratings, i.e., they are not required to offer them all.

ATOs must designate a single individual, the **Chief Flight Instructor**, to serve as the single point of contact and through whom all official communication with the PTD shall occur. Pilot ratings issued by the ATO are done so under the authority of the CFI, who must have no serious disciplinary actions on his/her VATSIM CERT record. The CFI shall be identified in the initial application. In the event that the CFI is replaced, that individual shall be identified in writing by an officer of the ATO. Failure to do so in a timely manner can result in the suspension of the ATO's authority to grant ratings. The responsibilities of the CFI are defined in section 3.2.

VATSIM partner Virtual Airlines (VA) and **Special Operations Organizations (VSO)** are third party organizations independent of VATSIM that organize virtual pilots to fly on the VATSIM network. These organizations have previously been approved under the VATSIM Virtual Airline/Special Operations Administration program. Approved VA/VSO organizations may apply for and receive authorization to become ATOs in order to issue VATSIM pilot ratings to VATSIM members.¹ VAs and VSOs may elect to issue VATSIM pilot ratings only to their members, but must notify PTD of their intention to do so (see below).

Independent ATOs are third party organizations that are established independent of the VATSIM PTD. These may be hosted by VATSIM divisions, regions, and ACC/ARTCCs, or by non-VATSIM groups (e.g., non-partner VA/VSOs or independent flying schools) that are not affiliated with any other larger organization. Their main purpose is training VATSIM members to obtain VATSIM pilot ratings. Such independent groups may apply for and be granted authorization² to become an ATO. Those ATOs hosted by agencies within VATSIM report for all training purposes directly to PTD and not to their hosting organizations, i.e., only VPPLT may authorize those ATOs to issue VATSIM pilot ratings.

The **CERT** is VATSIM's Certificate Server website that maintains confidential records of all members and is wholly VATSIM property. ATOs have limited access to CERT that allows them to modify VATSIM records of individuals who have successfully completed the ATO's authorized pilot rating programs. Updating a member's record requires that individual's CID. **Any abuse or attempted abuse of the CERT access privilege will result in suspension of the ATO and possible other action as provided in the VATSIM CoC, CoR, or the UA.**

2.3.2 ATO types and authority

Individual ATOs are classified as being of one of the following types:

¹ For the purpose of this section, ATOs with a pending application for VATSIM partnership will be considered as having such a partnership. If that application is not accepted, the ATO will operate as an independent flight school.

² Independent ATOs intending to provide training that includes military operations are reminded that VATSIM policy requires that such operations can only be carried out by partner VSOs

- **UNRESTRICTED** ATOs accept any VATSIM members for pilot training subject to the availability of admission slots, so long as they meet the prerequisites for a particular rating offered by the ATO.
- **MEMBERSHIP** ATOs only accept VATSIM members for pilot training who are also members of their umbrella organization. This is typical of VAs and VSOs, for example. Membership ATOs may, at their discretion, establish criteria for acceptance of their members to training for pilot ratings.

ATO types will be displayed on the PTD web page that provides links to ATOs so as to assist VATSIM member selection of training venues that best suit their interests and needs.

2.3.3 Admissions status

Normally, it is anticipated that admissions of new students to ATO pilot training programs will be **OPEN**. In order to make ATO selection by new students more efficient, ATOs offering the P1 rating shall notify the designated contact person within PTD if they are temporarily unable to accommodate new students to their P1 rating programs. Such programs will be listed as **CLOSED** on the PTD ATO web link page until such time as PTD is notified that the temporary restriction on new students has been removed.

2.4 Coordination and communication

As noted elsewhere in this document, all official communications between PTD and ATOs will pass between the ATO's Chief Flight Instructor (CFI) and VATSIM's VPPLT/PTD. Such communications will take place via email, the official VATSIM pilot training forums, and (by appointment at mutually agreed times) via such channels as Skype or TeamSpeak. CFIs should subscribe to the noted forums and are invited to participate actively in the discussions.

2.5 Certificate server policies

The CERT server is VATSIM's certificate server that supports both pilot and controller training. It maintains confidential records of all members and is wholly VATSIM property. ATOs are granted limited access to CERT that allows them to modify the pilot ratings of VATSIM members (identified by their unique Certificate of Identification (CID)) who have successfully completed the ATO program associated with a rating for which the ATO has been authorized. Individuals should never change their own records in any way; such changes should only be made by qualified colleagues who have previously been granted CERT access privileges as part of their official ATO responsibilities as described in subsection 3.2. Abuse of CERT access privileges by ATO staff members can result in disciplinary action including the termination of VATSIM membership, and can also result in the loss of ATO certification to issue pilot ratings. Access to the VATSIM CERT database is a sensitive privilege that must be respected by all who have it.

2.6 VATSIM pilot ratings

VATSIM offers a range of pilot ratings designed to help members acquire aviation skills, with an emphasis on operations within the online ATC environment. These range from the more basic ratings oriented toward new members to the more advanced that will challenge even

experienced pilots to expand their skills and knowledge. New VATSIM members are automatically assigned the P0 rating (Not Rated VATSIM Pilot).

In general, the VATSIM pilot ratings may be taken in any order, with a single important exception: the successful completion of the P1 rating is a prerequisite before a pilot may enroll for training for any other rating. Some partner VAs/VSOs may have other restrictions regarding the order of training in their programs that supercede the VATSIM policy stated here. Those ATOs can require (after approval by VPPLT) that their training curriculum be undertaken in a specific sequence. As a matter of general policy, all ATOs are required to recognize pilot ratings granted by any other ATO as sufficient prerequisite for their more advanced VATSIM training activities. Fully justified waivers to this policy must be approved in writing by VPPLT.

The standards for the various VATSIM pilot ratings are published by the PTD under authority granted to VPPLT. The standards are presented in a companion document, *Authorized Training Organizations Pilot Rating Standards*.

3. Authorized Training Organization Requirements

VATSIM's Pilot Training Department recognizes the need to encourage flexibility and experimentation in the development of online training for virtual pilots. As such it endeavors to keep to a minimum the requirements for ATO operations under its purview. ATOs may request waivers from those minimum requirements, either during the initial application process or later as part of their quality control and continuing improvement process. The VPPLT will consider such waiver requests, but is under no obligation to grant them. Furthermore the granting of such a waiver to one or several ATOs does not grant that waiver to others unless specifically approved in writing.

3.1 Web site

ATOs must utilize non-free web sites, and the areas containing confidential material must be appropriately secured using individual IDs and passwords for access by students, instructors, and other authorized personnel only. Confidentiality of student records must be maintained; instructors and other ATO staff may view all student records, but individual students should only have access to their own records. Summary statistics of the number of students, the number of ratings issued, and the pass/fail rate should be displayed on a page that is viewable by the public. In addition, PTD asks all ATOs to display on their main landing page a clearly visible link to a public page on which potential new students may easily view summary information about that organization's pilot rating program.

3.2 Personnel

Each ATO must have one **Chief Flight Instructor (CFI)** who is the primary liaison and communications link with VPPLT and PTD. All PTD emails are sent to the CFI's official VATSIM email address, i.e., the address that is associated with that person's VATSIM account. CFIs wishing to have their emails sent to an account associated with their ATO (for example, CFI_Name@myvirtualairline.com) must change their official VATSIM email address using the service provided at <https://cert.vatsim.net/vatsimnet/newmail.php>. All of CFI's VATSIM-related email will then be sent to the ATO-based address.¹

The CFI may appoint as many assistants as are required to implement the ATO training program. Those assistants should be certified by the ATO, under the supervision of the CFI, to provide instruction and administer examinations for VATSIM pilot ratings. If necessary to assure efficient ATO operation, the CFI may appoint a number of assistants to access the CERT database,. These individuals are bound by the CERT server policies outlined in this section.

For an ATO to receive authorization to provide training for a particular VATSIM pilot rating, the CFI or other staff member of that ATO must have been granted that rating prior to the PTD staff

¹ VATSIM members should remember that the Code of Conduct requires that they must maintain a valid email address in their official record at all times.

inspection as presented in subsection 4.3.2 of this handbook.² Please note the following important information:

- Only those ATO personnel that actually have been granted a specific rating may access the CERT to grant that rating to another individual. Having a “higher” rating does not confer upon a staff member the authority to confer a nominally “lower” rating, e.g., an individual holding a P5 rating, but not a P4, may **not** access the CERT to grant a P4 rating to anyone, whether it be a student or another ATO staff member.
- An ATO may **not** issue a specific rating unless it has previously received authorization to do so from PTD pursuant to the process outlined in section 4 of this handbook. Thus, even if a CFI or other staff member has a P4 rating, the ATO may not offer the P4 rating until it has received authorization from the PTD to do so. This requires that the ATO apply for authorization as provided in section 4.
- Normally ATO personnel can obtain the necessary rating from another ATO that is already offering it. A CFI or other staff member requiring a specific rating in order to be ready for the application review should contact the PTD for assistance in receiving priority training at another ATO. In exceptional circumstances where that training is not available, VPPLT/PTD can provide *ad hoc* training on an individual basis to a CFI or other ATO personnel so that an application can proceed. In general, this will only be the case for new ratings where training opportunities are not available at existing ATOs.

All instructional personnel should endeavor to maintain the highest ethics in terms of their interactions with students. The teacher-student relationship requires respect, compassion, and fairness on the part of both parties. As noted elsewhere in this document, online training on VATSIM is governed by its policies, especially the Code of Conduct, Code of Regulations and User Agreement.

3.3 Syllabus/lesson plans

In the common instance in which more than one individual will be participating in the implementation of a particular pilot rating, some means of coordinating the delivery of instruction and administration of examinations must be provided. Common methods of assuring such coordination among instructors and examiners are a formal syllabus and/or lesson plans that outline the overall structure of the educational experience to be delivered. Where appropriate, these materials should also be shared with students to help them prepare for instructional activities, as well as written and practical evaluations.

3.4 Instructional and testing facilities

Online education and training requires deployment of advanced technologies. ATOs must specify how those technologies will be utilized in the implementation of their pilot rating programs.

² This provision will take effect on January 1, 2014. CFIs are urged to ensure that the necessary certification is obtained well before this date.

3.4.1 Written

The VATSIM pilot standards require that students demonstrate understanding of theoretical and practical aspects of aviation. ATOs therefore present didactic material in a variety of formats (pdf, doc, txt, swf, etc.) using different types of learning management tools ranging from simple web pages to full-featured open-source learning environments (e.g., Moodle, eFront, etc.) and even extensive custom coded solutions. In all case, these learning tools must conform to the standards set forth in sections 3.1 and 3.3. Additionally, good educational practice requires that:

- Having taken an examination, students shall be provided in a timely way (immediate feedback being the most productive in terms of learning) with their final score, pass/fail status, and suggested study areas for remediation, if necessary.
- Pass/fail status, along with retest information in the event the student fails the exercise, shall be provided in a clear way that is easy for the student to find and understand.
- If used, multiple choice questions should be thoughtfully structured to assure their clarity and reliability.

3.4.2 Practical

Online assessment of practical flight tests and checkrides entails significant technological challenges. ATOs shall use practical testing methods that permit the accurate assessment of student performance relative to the standards set forth for each of the VATSIM Pilot ratings. These may either involve real-time observation or post-flight evaluation of recordings made during the checkride itself. ATOs must inform students of the minimum performance criteria for passing practical tests; these should be provided in sufficient time for students to practice their skills prior to the checkride. Students should be provided with a written assessment of their practical test results with one week of the checkride. Students who do not pass their checkride should be given specific examples of where and how they exceeded allowable performance tolerances, as well as recommendations for further study and practice.

3.5 Record keeping

ATOs must maintain and have access to student training records including oral, written, or practical test results for a period of no less than 24 months after the test's administration. This ensures that records created during a given calendar year will be available for audit by PTD at any time during the succeeding calendar year. ATOs may choose to retain records for longer periods at their discretion.

3.6 Quality assessment and improvement

ATOs must create a quality assessment and improvement process that helps to assure successful training outcomes for VATSIM members pursuing pilot ratings at all levels. That quality control and improvement process must be described in the initial application for ATO authorization. Information gleaned from that process will form the core of the periodic ATO audit.

Because the PTD expects that the pilot training experience will differ somewhat among different VATSIM member communities, it will not narrowly prescribe how individual ATOs should

measure and improve the quality of their training activities. Nonetheless PTD recommends that the following areas should, at a minimum, be part of all ATO quality control and improvement processes:

- Test question bank reliability and clarity
- Student utilization of ATO documentation
- Instructor participation and effectiveness
- Student satisfaction (determined by survey or interview) and rating success rate

Other areas will no doubt become apparent as ATOs become more familiar with the training process, so the effectiveness of the quality process, itself, should be evaluated and documented on a regular basis.

3.7 Conflict resolution

VATSIM's VPPLT and PTD should not be called upon to resolve disagreements among ATO staff members or between members of the training staff and students. Each ATO should create an appropriate conflict resolution policy that designates the process that individuals may undertake to have their concerns heard and disagreements decided within the ATO itself. Section A. 13. of the VATSIM Code of Conduct outlines its conflict resolution process; this can serve as a model for that created by individual ATOs. Conflicts or disagreements internal to ATOs should **not** be referred to VATSIM for resolution.

3.8 ATO Operations Manual

Every Authorized Training Organization must create and maintain an Operations Manual to ensure consistency of policy implementation among the members of its training staff. That manual should define the operational functions of the ATO, but it need not reproduce the contents of the ATO Policy and Procedures Handbook. Rather it should focus on the internal operations of that individual ATO.

At a minimum, each ATO Operations Manual should include the following main sections:

- Description of the document's scope
- Definition of management functions, e.g., Chief Flight Instructor, etc., and detailed description of management responsibilities and authority
- Organization diagram, if necessary
- Description of communications channels, both among staff and with students
- List of pilot ratings offered by the ATO and links to the detailed syllabus for each of those ratings used by that ATO in its training (perhaps in an Appendix)
- Description of methods and techniques for student training and assessment
- Evaluation criteria for each written and practical examination
- Explanation of the ATO quality control and improvement process
- Description of ATO conflict resolution and appeals process

An outline of this manual should be submitted at the time of initial application. A review draft of the final document must be submitted for approval to VP Pilot Training within two months of the final approval of an ATO's operation. Revisions of the manual (for example, after approval of an additional pilot rating) must be submitted in a timely manner..

4. ATO Certification

The VATSIM ATO program is designed to permit maximum flexibility to organizations desiring to provide pilot training experiences to VATSIM members. ATOs are encouraged to target their programs to the needs of their audience. VAs and flying clubs should provide training within the environment and with the rules and procedures under which their members normally fly, subject to the known limitations and accommodations of VATSIM. Although PTD operations are conducted in ICAO-standard English (with occasional help from Google Translate or other similar tool), ATOs wishing to provide instruction in other languages are strongly encouraged to apply.

This handbook, along with the rating standards, provides a definition of **what** the ATOs are required to teach and test; it is up to the individual ATOs to determine **how** they intend to do that and **who** their intended audience will be. The methods of training, the way that technology is deployed to support those methods, and the types of aircraft and flying experiences that will be used, those parameters are all at the discretion of the ATO.

4.1 Application format

All applications for ATO approval must be directed in writing to the VPPLT (vpplt@vatsim.net). Applicants are requested to submit their applications in English, with online translation tools serving as a backup where required. ATOs can elect to provide training for one or more of the currently defined ratings; they are not required to provide training in all of them. Acceptance of the written application is usually an interactive process with PTD sometimes requesting amplification or clarification over the period of several weeks. **Acceptance of the written application does not constitute authorization for an ATO to provide VATSIM pilot training.**

4.1.1 Initial rating

The applications for an ATO's first rating is more detailed than are those for subsequent ones, because much of the required detail does not change from one rating to another. No specific written format is required, but probably the most responsive approach is for applicants to model their submission on the structure of section 3 of this document, namely to utilize subject headings in the application that correspond to the individual subsections 3.1 through 3.8 inclusive. The application should provide information on how the candidate ATO intends to meet the requirements as spelled out in those eight subsections and also identify the Chief Flight Instructor, along with that person CID.

Applications must be complete in all respects; partial applications cannot be reviewed.

4.1.2 Subsequent ratings

Because many of the requirements are the same for all of the ratings, applications for subsequent ratings should focus on responding to the requirements of subsections 3.3 and 3.4 of this document specifically with regard to the new rating approval. Of special interest will be the syllabus for the new rating, as well as additional methods that might be required to assess and evaluate student performance on practical tests.

4.2 Waivers

Prospective ATO candidates are welcome to create training programs that meet exactly the standards set forth in the companion document, *Authorized Training Organizations Pilot Rating Standards*. Depending upon the nature of the ATO and its target student audience, the ATO may expand on these performance standards, for example by making the VATSIM standards part of a more rigorous VA flight training program. Prospective ATOs may request that certain aspects of the VATSIM pilot training standards be waived as part of the application process. Waivers can be granted if the ATO can demonstrate achievement of a similar desired outcome using alternate methods. VPPLT may grant such waivers at his/her discretion without setting a precedent for future waivers to other organizations.

4.3 Application review

Following acceptance of the written application, PTD shall appoint a staff member to complete the application process. That individual will inspect all aspects of the ATO training environment including written and practical examination question banks and methods, as well as record keeping and quality assessment and improvement mechanisms described in the written application.

4.3.1 On-site inspection and recommendation

The PTD inspector will arrange with the ATO's CFI to carry out a site inspection via teleconference (Skype, TS, etc.) The CFI will assist the inspector during the review providing access to any and all web site areas subject to examination and review. Following the completion of that inspection, the staff inspector shall, within one week, provide to the CFI and VPPLT the written results of the inspection, along with a recommendation concerning authorization.

4.3.2 Authorization

If the recommendation is positive, the ATO will be notified and can begin providing VATSIM pilot training. If significant issues have been identified that prevent full authorization, the ATO has one month to remediate those shortcomings to the satisfaction of the auditor who will make a final recommendation to the VPPLT. If only minor deficiencies are identified during the audit process, PTD may allow the ATO to begin training and certifying pilots for VATSIM ratings under provisional authorization for one month during which time the ATO must rectify the deficiencies and report same to the auditor. ATOs not coming into compliance within one month of the initial report of the auditor lose their interim authorization. They must resubmit their written application and go through the audit process again.

4.4 Periodic review process

The VATSIM PTD expects to perform at least one audit of every active ATO annually. This audit will be coordinated by a PTD staff member; the written recommendation of the auditor will be submitted to VP Pilot Training within one week of the conclusion of the audit. ATOs will be allowed one month from the submission of the audit report to correct deficiencies. Failure to undertake corrective measures within that time frame will result in the revocation of authorization and require that the ATO reapply as set forth in subsections 4.1 - 4.3 of this handbook.

PTD will provide ATOs with a description of the audit process in sufficient time to permit full compliance with its requirements. It is the intention of PTD to create a process that relies primarily upon a self-study followed by a brief teleconference with PTD staff. Details of each calendar year's audit activities will be shared with the ATO community on an annual basis.

In addition to the periodic review, VPPLT reserves the right to undertake an audit of ATO activities at his/her discretion. The reasons for such an review will be disclosed to the ATO prior to the start of the audit process.

4.5 Revocation of authorization

Authorization to operate as a VATSIM ATO is issued at the discretion of the VPPLT and may be revoked at his/her discretion under a variety of circumstances that include, but are not limited to:

- violation of the policies and procedures set forth in this manual with special focus on the CERT server policies in subsection 2.5;
- violation of the terms and conditions set forth in the VATSIM Code of Conduct, Code of Regulations, or User Agreement, along with any other relevant VATSIM policies;
- failure to remediate deficiencies identified in a periodic review (subsection 4.4), with notification to PTD of remedial steps taken;
- modification of the pilot training syllabus and/or lesson plans without prior approval of the VPPLT; and
- remaining in "CLOSED" status for more than 60 consecutive days or more than 90 days in 12 months.

Revocation of authorization may require that an organization submit a new written application as set forth in this section or may be reversed following remediation at the discretion of the VPPLT.

5. Supplemental Materials

5.1 Getting started with your new ATO

Congratulations! You are now a VATSIM Authorized Training Organization. Please accept the thanks of the online flight simulation community for participating in the pilot training program and best wishes for future success.

Having made it through the application process, you might be wondering, “OK what do I do now?” Here are some important next steps along the path to full-scale operations:

1. Be sure to **obtain CERT access for all members of the ATO staff who need it**. Some ATOs only allow one person, the Chief Flight Instructor, to access this database, but others are large enough that they require CERT access for additional instructors. In any case, send an email to vpplt@vatsim.net with a list of the names, email addresses and VATSIM CIDs for all personnel requiring access to the CERT database. Please note that all VATSIM members obtaining access to the CERT will be assigned a high security password to replace the one originally created when they first became members. *Be sure to take note of this high-security password because it will also be required when logging into the VATSIM network with either controller or pilot clients in the future.*
2. Remember that pursuant to subsection 2.5 of this handbook, **no member should ever change his or her rating in the CERT database!** In the case where a CFI is the only individual in an ATO with access to the CERT, changes to that individual's CERT entry can be made on request to vpplt@vatsim.net or other member of the PTD staff.
3. Please **join the pilot ratings development team**. CFIs and other qualified instructors who have been granted CERT access will also be provided access to the private VATSIM pilot training forums (unless CFI requests otherwise). You should take the opportunity to introduce yourself in that forum to the ATO community using the introduction thread you will find there. Please look around, check out the threads of interest to you, and feel free to contribute to future discussions. PTD will be regularly reviewing existing training standards, as well as leading the creation of others, so be prepared to become part of the team
4. PTD will announce the creation of your new ATO on the VATSIM forum. Please **prepare the news release of the new ATO announcement and let us know when you would like it published on the forum**. PTD can prepare a short announcement if you like, but we still need to hear from you, because we don't want to make the announcement that your new ATO is open for business until you are actually ready to accept new members.
5. Go to the VATSIM VA Partners web page and access the links manager in order to **create an active partner account (or edit your existing account) so that your organization is properly displayed in the ATO listing**. VATGOV9 will automatically be notified by email that your ATO application has been approved. PTD will edit the

VATSIM ATO matrix so that your organization is displayed therein along with the ratings that you are approved to deliver.

So please send VPPLT that email requested in 1 above so that we can get the ball rolling. And welcome aboard!