

Train to be an Air Traffic Services Specialist



“The technology is so advanced, it feels like I’m sitting in a real control tower talking to real pilots.”

Ashleigh Bindon | Former Air Traffic Control trainee

Keeping our skies safe is a big responsibility. It takes a certain kind of person with the right skills, aptitude and attitude. In return it offers a career full of challenges, opportunities, rewards and a sense of purpose and achievement.

What do Air Traffic Services Specialists do?

Air traffic controllers (ATCs) and flight service officers work in aerodrome control towers and surveillance centres throughout New Zealand, keeping aircraft separated and operating safely and efficiently, and providing advice and information to pilots.

How does air traffic control work through the airspace?

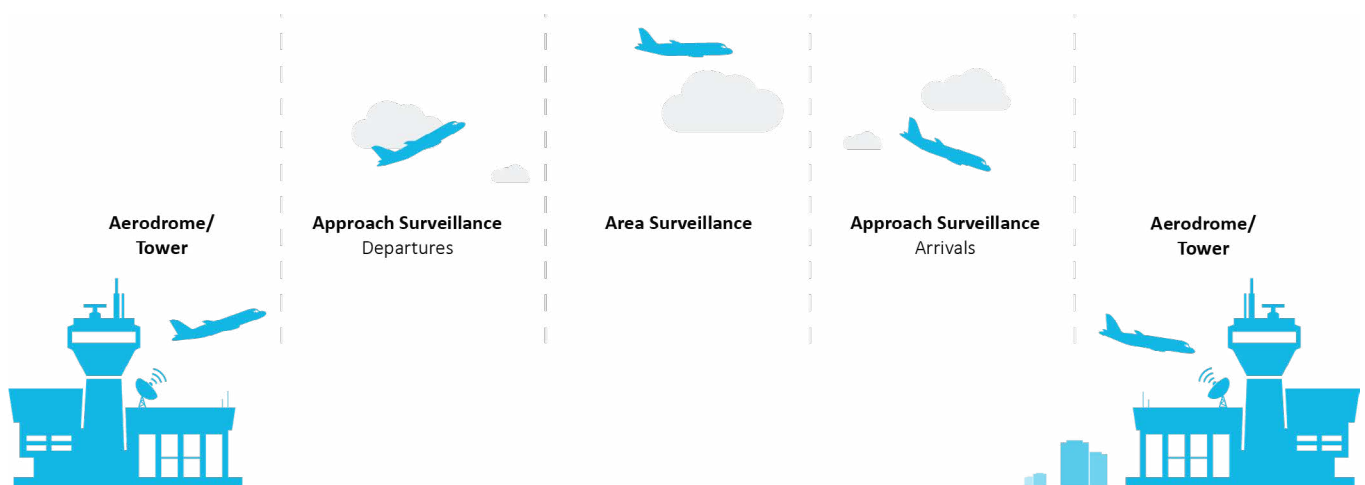
Different ATCs, as shown in the graphic below, handle the various stages of flight - they’re responsible for air traffic management, navigation services and communications.

Have you got what it takes?

To be an air traffic services specialist you need to be goal focused, a good decision maker and enjoy problem solving.

You’ll need to be a team player with good spatial awareness, strong communication skills and a calm under pressure nature.

ATC training is a New Zealand Qualifications Authority Certificate at Level 5 and Diploma at Level 6, so academic success is also important.



Are you eligible to apply for training?

You need to meet the following criteria to train as an air traffic services specialist in New Zealand:

- Be a New Zealand citizen or permanent resident, or Australian citizen
- Be aged at least 20 (for ATC) or 18 (for flight service) when you start training.
- Qualified to a minimum of Level 2 NCEA pass (12 credits pass in Maths at Level 1 and 8 credits in English at Level 2) and 42 other credits at Level 3 or equivalent
- If you are over 20 when you start training, then we consider your tertiary education and/or work experience
- Okay about working shift work, and willing to relocate anywhere within New Zealand
- Able to meet the requirements for a Civil Aviation Authority class three medical certificate (ATC only), and ‘fit and proper person’.

How long does the training take?

Training to be an air traffic services specialist is full-time, and takes from 8-9 months (for ATC) and 10 weeks (for flight service).

For ATC you’ll spend 8-9 months at the Training Centre in Christchurch, and then 4-9 months doing on-job training, most likely at a regional aerodrome control tower.

For flight service, you’ll spend about 6 weeks in the Training Centre in Christchurch and then 4-6 months doing on-job training at a regional aerodrome or surveillance centre.

ATC and flight service trainees become Airways New Zealand employees at the start of on-job training, and are paid during this aspect of their training. Following successful completion of on-job training they become fully rated ATCs and flight service officers.

APPLY NOW: airwaysinternational.com/atcapplynow



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What’s the selection process for the training programme?

Training to become an ATC or flight service officer is both demanding and rewarding. We use our carefully designed selection process to offer training to those people with the exact skills and attributes we need. Here’s the process:

<p>1 Apply online</p> <p>Complete your online application, including some information about yourself, and an eligibility questionnaire. We’ll then review, and select candidates to take through to testing.</p>	<p>2 Aptitude testing</p> <p>We’ll assess your aptitude via a range of online tests and assessments (in a three-stage process) – covering detail accuracy, spatial awareness, memory, multi-tasking, and a personality assessment.</p>	<p>3 Assessment Centre</p> <p>If selected, you’ll attend a one-day Assessment Centre in Christchurch (we will support your travel expenses). You’ll undertake further aptitude tests, group and individual activities, and an interview. You will also find out more about the role and training programme, and meet some air traffic controllers.</p>	<p>4 Selection</p> <p>Following successful background checks, you will be offered a place on an upcoming training programme. You will also need to complete a criminal records check, drug test and meet the Civil Aviation Authority’s medical requirements.</p>
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What’s the cost of the training programme?

For 2025, fees are \$14,000 incl GST for ATC training, and \$3,000 incl GST for FS training. Please refer to our website for further details – airwaysinternational.com/atcapplynow.

You may be eligible for a StudyLink student loan and/or student allowance, and Fees Free for the first year of study.

Where do ATCs and FSOs work, and what are the shifts?

Most new Airways air traffic services staff start their on-job training at a regional control tower, where they gain experience before seeking positions in one of Airways’ 17 control towers at around the country, or in one of our surveillance centres in Christchurch and Auckland.

They work in 7.5 hour shifts, including evenings and weekends, and generally on a shift pattern of four days on, two days off.

What’s the starting pay?

The training salary for ATC and FS trainees during on-job training is about \$60,000 per year.

A newly rated ATC working for Airways would start on around \$105,000 gross including base salary, shift loadings, superannuation and allowances.

Depending on the unit they start in, a newly rated flight service officer working for Airways would start on between around \$60,000 and \$115,000 gross, including base salary, shift loadings, superannuation and allowances.

Career pathways for Air Traffic Services

A professional career in air traffic services is available after only 9 months of training, through the New Zealand Diploma in air traffic services (see table below) and the New Zealand air traffic control licence which are both internationally recognised.

Once you’re rated as an ATC or flight service officer, you’ll start on a career path towards multiple opportunities, here in New Zealand and globally.

Level 5 - Certificate (60 credits)	Level 6 - Diploma (120-140 credits)
<p>New Zealand Certificate in Air Traffic Services (ICAO 051)</p> <p>Five unit standards (15 credits each)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Air law and operational procedures • Aeronautical meteorology • Air navigation • Principles of flight and aircraft performance • Human performance 	<p>New Zealand Diploma in Air Traffic Services</p> <p>Two strands:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aerodrome Control and Approach Control Procedural (ICAO 052 and ICAO 053) • Area Control Surveillance and Area Control Procedural (ICAO 054 and ICAO 055)