

Cleared for takeoff: a new class of future air traffic controllers begin their skyguide training

Geneva, 12 September 2011. The last of the three classes which comprise skyguide's annual intake of would-be air traffic controllers began their training today. The 19 trainees, who are drawn from throughout Switzerland and from other countries, too, have already passed the rigorous controller selection and are now embarking on the training itself, which will take around two-and-a-half years.

Of the 500 or so hopefuls who apply to skyguide every year, only around 10 per cent successfully negotiate the tough controller selection process and are accepted to train at the Skyguide Training Centre in Dübendorf, near Zurich. This select band now includes the 19 members of Class A11-4. The new recruits bring a wide range of qualifications to their task, from Swiss baccalaureates to completed technical apprenticeships and university degrees. They all have one thing in common already, though: a fascination for aviation.

A balanced blend of theory and practice

The trainees in the new Class A11-4 will now embark on a comprehensive training programme, with subjects ranging from aerodynamics and aircraft technology to meteorology, radar and radio technology, navigation, aeronautical information services and technical English. The course will also vary between blocks of theory, practical simulator instruction and training in a genuine operational environment. Upon completion of their course, the trainees will earn an air traffic controller's licence which is valid throughout the European continent. Since April 2010, graduates from the programme have also been awarded an air traffic controller's diploma issued by Switzerland's "Höhere Fachschulen", or colleges of higher vocational education and training.

A specific job profile

So what does it take to become an air traffic controller? This demanding profession, with the sizeable responsibilities it entails, calls for a specific set of skills: a keen spatial awareness, a capacity to cope with heavy work pressures, a pronounced ability to multi-task, logical thinking, and teamwork and communications skills. Would-be controllers should also have a very good command of English, be between 18 and 30 years of age and have completed either high school (with a Swiss "Matura" baccalaureate) or basic vocational training culminating in an "EFZ" Swiss federal certificate of proficiency.

Various future deployments

Skyguide's air traffic controllers work in a wide range of operating environments. In the Tower and in Approach/Departure Control they manage and monitor arriving and departing aircraft and coordinate takeoffs, landings and ground movements at the airport – at Bern, Geneva, Grenchen, Lugano, Sion, St. Gallen Altenrhein and Zurich, for example. The controllers who work in skyguide's two Area Control Centres in Zurich and Geneva, meanwhile, are

responsible for handling air traffic in Switzerland's upper airspace. Skyguide's military controllers may be assigned to tower and approach duties at Alpnach, Buochs, Emmen, Locarno, Meiringen, Dübendorf and Payerne aerodromes. Its fighter controllers, meanwhile, will be based at the Dübendorf Air Defence and Direction Centre, where they will use their highly specialised expertise to support the pilots of the Swiss Air Force in their tactical air combat activities.

Skyguide is always looking for qualified and motivated individuals to join its ranks. You will find more information in the "Training" section of our www.skyguide.ch website. Skyguide also holds regular information events on the controller's and other careers. These are always announced on [Facebook](#) in advance.

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Skyguide is responsible for providing air navigation services within Swiss airspace and in the airspace of certain adjoining regions in neighbouring countries. The company guides the civil and military aircraft entrusted to its care – around 3 170 flights a day or 1.16 million a year – through some of the busiest and most complex airspace in Europe. Skyguide is a non-profit limited company which has its head office in Geneva. The majority of its shares are held by the Swiss Confederation. The company generated total operating revenue of over CHF 365 million last year, and employs some 1 400 people at 14 locations in Switzerland. Skyguide is also a member, together with its partner organisations in Belgium, France, Germany, Luxembourg and the Netherlands, of the FABEC initiative to create a common functional airspace block that will bring greater efficiency to Central Europe's air traffic management services and activities.
