

Flight Controller Interviewing/Hiring Guidelines

Mission Operation Directorate

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National Aeronautics and
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1. Purpose

This training guide establishes the standards for interviewing and hiring candidates for the positions of flight controller in the Space Shuttle and International Space Station flight control position in the Mission Operations Directorate. The intent is to help educate both interviewer and interviewee on the demands and restrictions placed upon MOD flight controllers.

2. Scope

This work instruction is used by each interviewing organization to aid in preparing potential candidates for hiring. These practices have been proven over time to be good screening techniques for prospective flight controller candidates. Issues that have been a reason for attrition and failure of certification are listed to help better match the applicants to the requirements of the job.

3. Standardized Interviewing/Hiring

- 3.11 Generally, "On the spot" offers for flight controllers should be limited to those who have previous experience in operations or detailed knowledge of Houston manned space operations; however, on occasion an experienced technical interviewer may identify a college candidate who matches skills and abilities of the Flight Controller position. In those cases an on the spot offer may be made, but the candidate should be encouraged not to respond to the offer until the candidate has an opportunity to view MCC/office environment. Normally, NASA/USA/Barrios should bring person on site to view MCC/office environment prior to extending an offer.
- 3.12 Suggest a minimum of 3 persons interview/talk to person (hiring manager and senior/junior employee)
- 3.13 Every Candidate should be evaluated on their ability to progress to the FCR certification level. (Orbit for ISS, Ascent & Entry for SSP).
- 3.14 Mandatory- Random drug testing is done on all FC's. (Including check for alcohol for USA employees.) There is also a drug screen for all new hires.
- 3.15 Employee must be willing to travel (foreign countries).

4. Requirements for the Position

- 4.1 Candidates should have adequate English language skills that will not impair the ability to perform in the MCC. This includes comprehension and clarity in both speaking and writing.
- 4.2 An Air Traffic Control physical is required. This physical must be passed periodically in order to remain in a certified flight controller position. Specialized positions need to specify extra requirements for that job.
- 4.3 Security background check is required.
- 4.4 Must be able to meet MCC/DATA access requirements (USA citizen or have a Permanent Resident Alien Status).
- 4.5 Civil Servant candidates are required to have a successful completion of a standard professional curriculum in an accredited college or university leading to a bachelor's degree with major study in an appropriate field of engineering (not engineering technology), physical science, life science, or mathematics.

5. Caveats List for prospective Employees

- 5.11 Candidates need to be informed about the Texas climate (heat, hurricanes, rain, humidity, mild winters, etc.)
- 5.12 First time certifications take about a year to complete, but the average training time to achieve Shuttle Ascent/Entry FCR position is 5 years. The average training time to achieve Station FCR is 2-3 years. Training time is long and costs are high. Our desire is to hire people who can achieve these goals.
- 5.13 Everyone starts at entry level and advancement is based on certification, performance of assignments, and organizational needs.
- 5.14 There are a number of support tasks that may appear to be menial, but are necessary for mission success. All team members have, or will have, a share in performing these tasks.
- 5.15 This is an operations job not a hardware design job.
- 5.16 This is not a typical M-F 8-5 job. It is a life style and will affect other people in your life. Workweeks in excess of 40 hours are common. During station assembly missions, 70 to 80 hour weeks are expected, including shift work for up to 13 days straight. Missions during holidays will require support.
- 5.17 Once you are assigned to a mission, you are expected to work it even if it slips into vacation or holiday plans. You may have to change/cancel personal plans. If you are an ISS flight controller, you will be periodically assigned on call. This will limit your travel and outside work activities.
- 5.18 Non-mission times can have very flexible schedules that are frequently subject to last minute changes. (Simulation schedule includes activities that go to Midnight, etc.) Shift assignments vary week to week.
- 5.19 Candidate must be able to maintain an objective, professional attitude under pressure. Controllers may encounter conflict and will be challenged at times in the Control Center and in meetings.
- 5.110 Candidates will need to work well under stress and be able to appropriately respond in a crisis situation.

6. Qualities/Expectations List for prospective Employees

- 6.11 People who are motivated to do this job. Desire to be part of NASA community and make our programs succeed.
- 6.12 High GPA does not guarantee person is suited for real-time operations. A wide GPA range should be considered. Being able to demonstrate practical application of theory is important.
- 6.13 Demonstrated work ethics.
- 6.14 Good people skills, demonstrated team skills and leadership skills.
- 6.15 Communication/Presentations skills should be above average (oral and written).
- 6.16 Good problem solving skills.
- 6.17 Highly motivated people with initiative to quickly learn new systems.