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**Information regarding CAA certification**

On December 31st 2020 the U.K. will adopt a common set of drone laws aimed at harmonising how unmanned aviation is regulated across all European member states.

Whereas all national U.K. legislation relating to drones has always differentiated between commercial and recreational flight, the new regulations will instead apply a set of rules based on the aircraft weight and its proximity to uninvolved people and areas used by uninvolved people.  There will no longer be any differentiation between commercial vs. recreational operations.

In preparation for this change, organisations formerly approved by the U.K. CAA as National Qualified Entities (NQE’s) and who were authorised to provide courses and issue Recommendation Certificates to operators seeking a permission (AKA a Permission for Commercial Operations – PfCO), have been transitioned to this new regulatory framework. These organisations now referred to as Recognised Assessment Entities (RAE’s) who are now approved to grant two types of certification on behalf of the U.K. CAA.

The General VLOS Certificate is almost identical to a legacy PfCO, in that it allows operations of drones up to 25kg to within 50m of uninvolved people and removes the requirement to fly no closer than 150m from areas used for residential, recreational, commercial or industrial purposes. It is a prerequisite to the operator applying to the CAA for a permission, without which the GVC does not provide these privileges. In this sense it is almost identical to the previous framework. The course content is nearly identical to the legacy PfCO with the exceptions being a slightly modified flight assessment and the inclusion of updated aviation law and regulations.

*(Please note that after 31/12/20 the CAA will only issue permissions to operators who have completed a GVC course. Legacy PfCO holders will be permitted to renew their permissions until 2025 without upgrading to the GVC standard, provide they do not let their permission lapse).*

The A2 Certificate of Competence is a new certification that allows the holder to fly small drones with reduced separation distances in the new “Open” category. Flight within the Open category is different from the GVC (which allows holders to fly within the Specific category) in that it does not require any special permissions or approvals from the U.K. CAA. An A2 CofC allows to the holder to fly per the following descriptions:

*Transitional Period (December 31st 2020 to December 31st 2022)*

From the 31st of December 2020 an A2 Certificate of Competence allows a holder to:

* fly a drone in the A2 (Open) subcategory (drones up to 2kg) and the A1 subcategory (drones up to 500 grams)
* fly without the usual 150m separation distance from places used by people (residential, recreational, industrial, commercial areas)
* fly a sub-2kg drone to within 50m of uninvolved people (A2 subcategory)
* fly a sub-500g drone with no restrictions on proximity to uninvolved people (but not directly overhead) (A1 subcategory)

*Continuing Period (December 31st 2020 onwards)*

From the 31st of December 2020 an A2 Certificate of Competence allows a holder to:

* fly a drone in the A2 (Open) subcategory (appropriately C-marked drones up to 4kg) and the A1 subcategory (appropriately C-marked drones up to 900 grams)
* fly without the usual 150m separation distance from places used by people (residential, recreational, industrial, commercial areas)
* fly a sub-4kg C-marked drone to within 30m of uninvolved people (reduced to 5m when in slow speed mode) (A2 subcategory)
* fly a sub-900g C-marked drone with no **restrictions on proximity to uninvolved people (but not directly overhead) (A1 subcategory)**

The Drone Piloting Level 4 Diploma course will qualify you to apply for combined certification that includes the A2 CofC to anyone completing its GVC course. The latter option allows the operator to apply for a CAA permission and then choose for any given tasking whether to fly under their permission or under their A2 CofC.