Airport Operations Fundamentals for New Staff

11 – 15 October 2027
Seattle, Washington (USA)



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Ref: 328815_228641 **Date:** 11 – 15 October 2027 **Location:** Seattle, Washington (USA) **Fees:** 5900 GBP

Airport operations fundamentals are the basic facts a new joiner needs about how an aerodrome is laid out, which units run each zone and which rules keep aircraft, people and baggage moving without harm. This 1-week foundation course is for new staff in ground handling, terminal and airfield roles, and it ends with an annotated aerodrome map and turnaround timeline. Blackbird Training Centre runs this airport operations fundamentals course for new staff.

Introduction

Three references shape the course. Annex 14 sets the international standards for aerodrome design and use, from runway markings to apron layout. A Safety Management System SMS is the structured method an aerodrome uses to find hazards and control risk, built on policy, risk management, assurance and promotion. Annex 17 sets the baseline for aviation security, including screening and access control. The level is introductory and assumes no earlier aviation experience. Teaching uses guided map work, turnaround timelines and short scenario exercises drawn from a regional aerodrome and a large hub.

Course Objectives

- Define the main zones of an aerodrome, from runway and taxiways to apron, terminal and kerbside, and what happens in each.
- Distinguish the movement area from the manoeuvring area and apply the right access and vehicle rules to each.
- Interpret runway, taxiway and apron markings, signs and lights on a ground map.
- Compare the tasks in an aircraft turnaround and select the order that keeps a departure on time.
- Apply basic SMS hazard reporting to a ramp occurrence and explain why the report matters.
- Distinguish the roles of the units involved when an aerodrome activates its incident plan.

Target Audience

- New joiners in ground handling and ramp teams who must judge when it is safe to approach a parked aircraft.
- Terminal and check-in staff in their first year who decide how to direct travellers and baggage through each processing step.
- Airfield and apron support staff who drive or work near aircraft and choose the correct route and clearance before moving.
- Graduates and trainees joining aerodrome operators or airlines who need to choose which unit or career track suits them.
- Staff transferring from other industries into aviation roles who must judge which rules apply in each part of the site.



Course Outline

Day 1: How an Aerodrome Is Organised

- Airside vs Landside: The Security Boundary and What Lies on Each Side
- Aerodrome Zones: Runway, Taxiways, Apron, Terminal and Kerbside in Sequence
- Aerodrome Operator vs Airline vs Ground Handler: Dividing Responsibilities on Site
- Aerodrome Categories: Hub, Regional and Cargo Sites and How Their Workloads Differ
- Key Daily Measures: On-Time Departures, Queue Times and Baggage Delivery Times

Day 2: Airfield Layout and Ramp Work

- Movement Area vs Manoeuvring Area: Access Rules for People and Vehicles
- Annex 14 Markings, Signs and Lights: Reading the Airfield Correctly
- Apron Control and Stand Allocation: How Aircraft Are Given Parking Positions
- Foreign Object Debris: Sources, Inspection Walks and Reporting Duties on the Ramp
- Ground Handling Tasks: Fuelling, Catering, Cleaning and Loading Around the Aircraft

Day 3: Aircraft Turnaround and Terminal Flows

- Aircraft Turnaround Sequence: Arrival, Unloading, Servicing, Boarding and Pushback Steps
- Critical Path vs Parallel Tasks: Keeping a Departure on Time During Turnaround
- Traveller Processing: Check-In, Security Screening, Border Control and Boarding Gates
- Baggage Handling System: Induction, Sorting, Make-Up and Reclaim Stages Explained
- Ground Transport Access: Kerbside, Car Parks, Taxis and Rail Links for Travellers

Day 4: Hazards, Security and Incident Response

- Safety Management System: Policy, Risk Management, Assurance and Promotion Components
- Hazard vs Risk: Spotting Ramp Dangers and Judging How Likely Harm Is
- Annex 17 Security Basics: Screening, Access Passes and Restricted Zone Rules
- Aerodrome Incident Plan: Alerts, Rescue and Firefighting Roles and Assembly Points
- Occurrence Reporting: Writing a Short, Factual Report After a Ramp Event

Day 5: Putting the Fundamentals to Work on a Shift

- Shift Walkthrough: Applying Zone, Marking and Access Rules to a Day on Site
- Delay Scenario vs Normal Turnaround: Tracing How One Late Task Spreads
- Collaborative Decision Making Basics: Sharing Turnaround Milestones Between Partner Organisations
- Sustainability on the Ramp: Fuel Use, Ground Power and Waste Separation
- Final Deliverable: Annotated Aerodrome Map With Turnaround Timeline and Occurrence Report



Skills You Will Gain

- Aerodrome zone terminology
- Airfield marking and sign recognition
- Turnaround sequencing
- Ramp hazard identification
- Occurrence reporting
- Baggage flow tracing
- Access control rules

Why Attend This Course

- From learning the layout by trial and error to reading the aerodrome map and its markings from the first shift.
- From following ramp instructions without context to understanding how each task fits the turnaround.
- From not knowing whom to call to knowing each unit's role when the incident plan is activated.
- From scattered induction notes to an annotated aerodrome map with turnaround timeline, the final deliverable of the course.

Conclusion

Working at an aerodrome starts with knowing its zones, its rules of access and the sequence that turns an aircraft round. The course makes clear the line between airside and landside, the difference between the movement and manoeuvring areas, and how a hazard differs from a risk. It suits people in their first months in ground handling, terminal or airfield roles who need a clear grounding before specialised or supervisory training.

Course FAQs

What are airport operations fundamentals?

They are the basic knowledge of how an aerodrome is divided into zones, which organisations work in each zone and which standards govern markings, access, security and hazard reporting. New staff need this before taking on any specialised role.

What is the difference between airside and landside in airport operations fundamentals?

Airside lies beyond the security screening point and includes the apron, taxiways and runways, where access passes and escort rules apply. Landside covers kerbside, car parks and public terminal areas that anyone may enter.



Which standards does the Airport Operations Fundamentals for New Staff course follow?

It follows Annex 14 for aerodrome layout, markings and lights, Annex 17 for security basics, and the four components of a Safety Management System for hazard reporting and risk control.

Is the Airport Operations Fundamentals for New Staff course right for a new ramp agent?

Yes. A new ramp agent learns the airfield markings, access rules, turnaround sequence and hazard reporting needed to work near aircraft, at a level that assumes no earlier aviation experience.

What do delegates produce in the Airport Operations Fundamentals course?

Delegates produce an annotated aerodrome map showing zones, access points and markings, a timeline for one aircraft turnaround and a short occurrence report written after a ramp scenario.

