

Air traffic services careers

See the service family beyond air traffic control

Air traffic services (ATS) is a family of functions, not another name for one job. It includes air traffic control, flight information and alerting functions. Different units may provide several services, and national arrangements differ. This guide helps you compare the purpose, responsibility and training of a role before choosing a course. Use the separate ATC guide to explore controller pathways. [T1]

Educational review draft. Owner and subject review pending. Sources checked 27 October 2026; next review not yet scheduled.

What the work contributes

- Help the right aviation information reach the right people, with clear records and coordination between responsible units.
- Support an orderly service by distinguishing verified facts, requests and decisions, rather than treating every radio message as an instruction.
- Maintain continuity across shifts and raise uncertainty through the appropriate organization; authority follows the assigned function and competence.

An illustrative working day

Original simplified example, not a duty schedule or an operating procedure. Actual work varies by organization, operation and assigned role.

Part of the work	What a beginner should notice
Before a shift	A trainee reviews the learning assignment with a supervisor and confirms what they may observe or support.
Information handling	The team works with information from other units and checks which service and person are responsible.
An unexpected development	A qualified colleague follows the applicable escalation arrangements; the trainee observes the boundary of their own responsibility.
Handover	Relevant information and unresolved questions are handed over. Duties differ between control, information and support roles.

Keep the role boundaries clear

ATC supports collision prevention and orderly traffic flow. Flight information service (FIS) supplies useful advice and information. Alerting service connects aircraft needing assistance with the responsible rescue organizations. Aerodrome flight information service (AFIS) provides information and alerting at the aerodrome and associated airspace; it is not aerodrome control. These functions can share a unit without becoming interchangeable job authorities. [T1, T2]

Are you more interested in real-time coordination, information quality or supporting a specialist service

Build your learning sequence

Use this sequence to investigate the career before committing to formal training. It is an educational exploration path, not an approved syllabus or a compulsory worldwide route.

Map functions before job titles

Write down the service you want to understand: control, flight information, aerodrome information or related support. Identify a country and an actual service provider.

Build clear communication habits

Practise careful listening, concise summaries, basic numeracy and organized note-taking in ordinary learning tasks. Accurate questions matter as much as quick answers.

Compare responsibilities

Read two official role descriptions and compare what each person can decide, communicate or only pass onward. Do not assume that similar equipment means identical authority.

Check the exact training route

Ask the authority or provider which selection, training, assessment and local authorization apply to that particular function. A course called air traffic services may not qualify a learner for the intended post.

Plan supervised development

Ask how trainees progress to assessed duties, how competence is maintained and what evidence is recorded. Treat later movement between roles as a new requirements check, not an automatic promotion.

A worked exploration decision

Fictional example: Lina compares an AFIS opportunity with a controller programme. Both involve aerodrome communications, but Lina records different responsibilities and asks each provider what training and assessment the role needs. Lina does not assume that completing one pathway supplies the authority required by the other.

Try a small learning task

Make a four-column comparison card: service name, purpose, responsible organization and question to verify. Use ATS, ATC, FIS and AFIS as research labels. Add alerting as a function that may sit alongside other services. Do not write operational radio messages or practise directing real aircraft.

My question or learning task and what I will produce

Separate routes from requirements

Country examples illustrate different systems. They do not establish equivalence, transferability or your eligibility. Check the current authority, course and employer requirements for the exact role before acting.

European Union framework example

EASA and the relevant national competent authority • Service-organization example, not a personal licence route

The EU ATS provisions distinguish flight information centres, ATC units and AFIS units. AFIS units provide flight information and alerting, while ATC units can provide control, information and alerting. Identify the actual unit and applicable national personnel arrangements before assuming a qualification route. [T1] This example uses EASA's March 2025 compilation; verify later amendments and national application.

United States example

Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) • Different facility and service terminology

The FAA describes Flight Service Stations as providing briefings, flight-plan processing, advisories and assistance, and relaying ATC clearances. Relaying a clearance is not the same as originating control authority. Do not equate US Flight Service automatically with an AFIS role elsewhere. [T3]

Three labels to use when you compare options

Category	How to interpret the information
Regulated requirements	In the EU framework, providers must ensure personnel are trained and competent. The particular service and national personnel rules still matter; a general ATS course does not establish all privileges. [T4]
Employer conditions	Selection methods, shift patterns and previous experience can differ by employer and vacancy. Ask which criteria implement a rule and which are recruitment choices.
Typical preparation	Listening, structured thinking, geographical awareness and teamwork are useful exploration foundations, not proof of operational competence or personal eligibility.

Ask the question that changes the decision

Ask: which service will I provide, who authorizes me to perform it, and what remains after the course? Request a clear distinction between a training completion document, any required licence or certificate, and unit-specific competence or authorization.

My intended country and the authority or employer I will verify with

Medical, age, experience, security and work-permission questions belong with the competent authority or responsible organization. Do not use this guide to decide personal eligibility or share private records.

Plan your next step

Take one manageable action, keep its source and date, and leave unanswered questions visible. None of these exercises grants a licence, qualification, operational authority or job entitlement.

- 1 Choose one ATS function and country rather than searching only for aviation jobs.
- 2 Compare an official service description with a current role description and identify any unclear authority.
- 3 Ask the provider to map training, assessment and local authorization to that exact role.
- 4 Complete the service-comparison card and choose one communication skill to practise safely.

The most important question I still need answered

My next action and review date

Official sources and scope

All links below were checked at the stated scope on 27 October 2026. Requirements can change. These organizations do not endorse Avi Learner or this guide.

[T1] [EASA ATM/ANS rules: ATS.TR.100-110](#)

ATS purposes, divisions and units; March 2025 online compilation.

[T2] [EUROCONTROL Manual for Aerodrome Flight Information Service: publication page](#)

AFIS implementation guidance context; 2010 publication, not a licensing rule.

[T3] [FAA AIM 4-1: Services Available to Pilots](#)

US centres, towers and Flight Service Station functions.

[T4] [EASA ATM/ANS rules: management and personnel competence](#)

ATM/ANS.OR.B.005 training and competence responsibilities. March 2025 compilation; verify later amendments.

Explore related Avi Learner pages

[Air traffic management overview](#)

[Air traffic controller role profile](#)

[Training provider checklist](#)

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