

Air traffic controller

Air traffic controllers coordinate aircraft movement within an assigned operational scope. Tower, approach and area positions differ; this is not a generic licence to control anywhere. Compare the actual training employer, jurisdiction and eventual unit rather than assuming that a course title establishes the required authority. [EMP1, EMP2, REG1]

Other titles to compare: ATCO, Tower controller, Approach controller, Area controller. Titles alone do not establish equivalent duties.

What the role does

- Monitor the traffic situation and communicate authorized instructions within the assigned area. [EMP2]
- Coordinate with other controllers as responsibilities transfer between positions. [EMP2]
- Develop and maintain the competence required for the particular control role. [REG1]

Where the work happens

Aerodrome control tower; Area or approach control environment; assignment depends on employer.

Employer example 1

NATS • United Kingdom • Trainee Air Traffic Controllers

Standing role description not a vacancy • Checked 2026-10-27 [EMP1]

Category	What this employer states
Essential in this source	At least 18 when applying; indefinite unrestricted UK work rights. Five GCSEs at grade 4 or stated Scottish/equivalent qualifications, including English and mathematics. SC security clearance and complete initial Class 3 medical assessment; comply with the drug and alcohol policy.
Other stated conditions	No previous aviation experience required. Initial study is followed by operational-unit training; postings depend on business needs.

One employer and stated role only; this record does not establish current hiring unless explicitly marked active.

Desirable requirements are not separately classified here; do not infer that none apply.

Employer example 2

NAV CANADA • Canada • Air Traffic Controller

Standing role description not a vacancy • Checked 2026-10-27 [EMP2]

Category	What this employer states
Essential in this source	At least 18; high-school diploma or equivalent; Canadian citizenship or permanent residence. Required regional language ability; relocation and full-time training availability. Meet the stated medical, security and drug-screening conditions.
Other stated conditions	Communication, memory, teamwork and problem-solving appear under valued qualities, not a separate desirable-qualification list.

One employer and stated role only; this record does not establish current hiring unless explicitly marked active.

Desirable requirements are not separately classified here; do not infer that none apply.

Separate requirements from preparation

UK ATC service: The CAA requires the appropriate ATCO licence and task-relevant rating/endorsement. Full-licence applicants progress from a student licence through the applicable approved unit course and assessment, with the stated medical and training conditions. Employer selection and the licensing process are separate gates. [REG1]

Still to verify: Canadian licence details were not independently reviewed; the Canada record is an employer example only.

Explore a realistic entry route

- Choose one jurisdiction and compare a trainee programme with an experienced-controller vacancy. Record which route matches your actual experience; do not borrow the conditions of one route to justify eligibility for the other.
- Create a requirements table with four columns: employer admission, regulator licensing, unit competence and unanswered questions. Use the exact notice date and identify the organization responsible for each answer.
- Plan the practical commitment before applying: relocation, full-time learning and uncertainty about placement. Request official clarification of qualifications where needed; a self-made study plan cannot substitute for the employer's selection or approved training.

Build evidence of your skills

- Describe a real non-aviation situation where you noticed conflicting information, paused and checked the source. Show what you personally did and what changed; avoid claiming this proves controller competence.
- Create a short handover for a fictional community event. Separate confirmed facts, pending items and responsibility. Revise it after another reader identifies an ambiguity, and retain both versions as evidence of learning.

Prepare for an interview

- Preparation prompt, not a reported interview question: how would you explain the difference between admission to training and authorization for a particular operational position? Use the employer and regulator sources rather than memorized slogans.
- Prepare an honest example of teamwork under competing demands. Explain the limits of your responsibility, how you sought help and what you would improve; do not invent operational experience.

Investigate possible next roles

Investigate later instruction, supervision or safety-support duties only after understanding their experience, competence and authorization requirements. Moving between tower, approach, area or countries is not automatic portability.

Sources and scope

[EMP1] [NATS Trainee Air Traffic Controllers](#)

Standing role description not a vacancy. United Kingdom. Checked 2026-10-27.

[EMP2] [NAV CANADA Air Traffic Controller](#)

Standing role description not a vacancy. Canada. Checked 2026-10-27.

[REG1] [UK CAA Air traffic controller licence](#)

Full ATCO licence, task-appropriate ratings and approved unit training/assessment. UK example only; Canadian personal licensing conditions require separate verification. Checked 2026-10-27.

Educational reference. Verify current requirements with the relevant authority and employer. Examples are selected employer conditions, not an exhaustive application checklist or worldwide eligibility rules. Verify the current notice before acting. Learning exercises are not operational training, assessment or evidence of professional authorization. No job guarantee.