



Ministry  
of Defence

Air Command Secretariat  
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Headquarters Air Command  
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Ref: FOI2022/07408

[REDACTED]

19 July 2022

Dear [REDACTED]

Thank you for your e-mail of 20 June 2022 in which you requested the following information:

*"It is my understanding that, due to various reasons, the length of time between completing MIOT and becoming operational as a Pilot is much longer than the advertised timelines on the RAF Recruitment website. I understand that this is partly due to a backlog in the UK MFTS. I would like to request the following: a. What are the currently forecasted lengths of time from completing MIOT to joining an operational squadron for each of the three pilot streams (Fast Jet, Multi-Engine and Rotary)? b. What efforts are being undertaken to reduce delays within the UK MFTS? c. By what extent are the delays in training pilots expected to be reduced within the next 5 years?"*

I am treating your correspondence as a request for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA).

A search for the information has now been completed, and I can confirm that information in scope of your request is held.

**What are the currently forecasted lengths of time from completing MIOT to joining an operational squadron for each of the three pilot streams (Fast Jet, Multi-Engine and Rotary)?**

The current average total time a Royal Air Force (RAF) trainee pilot can expect to spend in training, from completion of Modular Initial Officer Training (MIOT), also known as Phase 1 training, to starting at Operational Conversion Unit (OCU) and inclusive of courses and holding periods, is as follows by stream:

Fast Jet (FJ)	= 77 months
Multi Engine (ME)	= 63 months
Rotary Wing (RW)	= 78 months

The current average total time a RAF trainee pilot is taking to complete UK Military Flying Training System (UKMFTS) training, including supplementary courses but **excluding** holding periods, is as follows by stream:

FJ = 31 months  
ME = 23 months  
RW = 27 months

Please note that forecast time to joining an operational squadron is not included in the UKMFTS training times. OCU courses, also known as Phase 3 training, and assignment to operational squadrons is subject to many variables ranging from operational requirement to personal circumstances. Phase 3 training is outside the remit and control of the UKMFTS, also known as Phase 2 training.

**What efforts are being undertaken to reduce delays within the UK MFTS?**

The number of RAF pilots entering MIOT has been reduced by approximately two thirds to maintain a minimal training throughput. Additionally, the training capacity within UKMFTS is being increased for FJ and RW streams, which will balance the training flow through the UKMFTS pipeline and reduce the total time taken to progress through Phase 2 training.

**By what extent are the delays in training pilots expected to be reduced within the next 5 years?**

The scale of the time in training for RAF pilots has been influenced by a number of factors over the past 18-24 months. The combination of temporary pauses during the Covid-19 pandemic and outcomes from the recent Integrated Review has led to an extended period within the flying training pipeline. Mitigation measures have been introduced to keep all trainees appropriately current and competent for their future roles. It is anticipated that the measures put in place to resolve this temporary pipeline issue will see a successful return to normal training timescales over the next 3 to 4 years.

Under Section 16 of FOIA (advice and assistance), it may be useful for you to know that the training timescales as stated on the RAF recruitment website are specific to course training time from completion of Elementary Flying Training (EFT) to pre-OCU. Therefore, it is specific to course lengths within Phase 2 training and is not inclusive of Phase 1 or Phase 3 training and excludes any holding periods.

Additionally, most trainee aircrew will face holds during their flying training. This is not new or unusual and is done to ensure all courses are efficiently utilised, loaded and coordinated with appropriately trained/prepared students. The RAF aim for most trainees to take the majority of their holds immediately following EFT and for this period to be used productively in aircrew related roles at home and overseas. Trainee aircrew on hold are fulfilling required and essential roles within the Armed Forces with an aim to expand their skills in other areas of Ministry of Defence (MOD) business as well as supporting a wide variety of current live operations around the globe – subsequently they will complete their training as more rounded and broadened individuals. Examples of such roles have included Project Officer for a Red Arrows Tour, Cultural Support to the Defence Academy and academic/language courses that allow individuals to gain experience that will be invaluable in their later careers. The RAF also aim to place post-EFT trainees, on a rolling basis, in areas where they can gain and maintain flying continuity. This minimises skill fade/refresher times and cost. After Advanced Flying Training (typically the final phase of UKMFTS training), all trainees will be posted to the front-line station that accommodates their OCU so that they can be utilised by the front-line immediately.



If you have any queries regarding the content of this letter, please contact this office in the first instance.

If you are not satisfied with this response or wish to complain about any aspect of the handling of your request, then you should contact me in the first instance. If informal resolution is not possible and you are still dissatisfied then you may apply for an independent internal review by contacting the Information Rights Compliance Team, Ground Floor, MOD Main Building, Whitehall, SW1A 2HB (e-mail [CIO-FOI-IR@mod.uk](mailto:CIO-FOI-IR@mod.uk)). Please note that any request for an internal review must be made within 40 working days of the date on which the attempt to reach informal resolution has come to an end.

If you remain dissatisfied following an internal review, you may take your complaint to the Information Commissioner under the provisions of Section 50 of the Freedom of Information Act. Please note that the Information Commissioner will not normally investigate your case until the MOD internal process has been completed. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at: Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF. Further details of the role and powers of the Information Commissioner can be found on the Commissioner's website at <https://ico.org.uk/>.

Yours sincerely,

Air Command Secretariat