



Home Office

# **Approved Gate Check**

## **A Guide for Carriers**

Carriers Liaison Section

v 5.0

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## Background

This fact sheet provides information on how we can help careful carriers reduce the number of charges they incur for inadequately documented passengers through the Approved Gate Check (AGC) scheme. AGC status is available to carriers that meet specific criteria.

If granted to a carrier, AGC status allows certain types of charges to be waived thus reducing the number of charges a carrier is liable to pay.

The AGC status scheme is administered by the Carriers Liaison Section (CLS) and sits within the Home Office. CLS is a small friendly team based in offices situated very close to Heathrow Airport. The whole team is involved with the running of the AGC status scheme and all have a good working knowledge of the AGC process. If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to get in touch with us at the following address:

Email: [carriersliaisonsection@homeoffice.gov.uk](mailto:carriersliaisonsection@homeoffice.gov.uk)

The following is a list of frequently asked questions which you may find useful in helping you to understand the benefits of AGC status.

### What exactly is AGC Status?

AGC status is a scheme whereby the Home Office will waive some charges which carriers are liable for under section 40 of the Immigration & Asylum Act 1999. AGC status is granted in return for an audited high standard of document checking and security procedures at a port of embarkation, a good level of co-operation from the carrier and an established record in the timely settlement of outstanding charges.

### Why might I wish to apply for AGC status?

All carriers operating flights to the UK are liable to a charge (currently £2,000) under Section 40 of the Immigration & Asylum Act 1999 if they transport a passenger to the UK who does not hold a valid immigration document or who does not hold a visa (if required to do so). AGC status allows for some types of charges to be waived thus reducing the number of charges you are liable to pay.

### Which charges will I not have to pay?

If you are granted AGC status on a particular route to the UK i.e. Alicante – UK, then you would not be liable to a £2,000 charge for the following charges:

- No Document Arrival (i.e. a passenger fails to produce any document to the Immigration Officer when asked to do so)

- Some Mutilated Document Cases (i.e. if a passenger rips out a visa or other endorsement from their passport en route to the UK)
- Two technical charge waivers per quarter per AGC accredited route. (i.e. no visa, expired visa or deferred visa).

#### What is the criteria for achieving AGC Status?

The carrier's main requirements for first achieving, and then retaining, AGC status are as follows (and differ slightly for air and sea carriers):

##### Airlines:

- Where the carrier has outstanding debts under Section 40 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999, we will expect prompt payment. Where the carrier account has entered aged debt, that is, debt in excess of 6 months requiring recovery action by the Home Office, the carrier will not be eligible to apply for AGC accreditation on any new routes
- A full document check must be conducted immediately prior to boarding. This should take place at the departure gate or within an adjacent sterile area, and include:
  - (i) a full check of the document to ensure that it is valid, genuine, and that the person presenting it is the rightful holder
  - (ii) a visa check to confirm that a valid visa is held where required
  - (iii) reconciliation of the travel document with the details on the passenger's boarding card
- There must be an adequate level of security to ensure that these checks cannot be circumvented
- The checks must be conducted by trained staff, at check-in where applicable, but always at the boarding gate
- These arrangements may require inspection in advance by the Home Office at the carrier's expense
- A high standard of co-operation with the Home Office (Immigration Liaison Manager / UK arrival port, Carriers Liaison Section), including the provision of denied boarding (DNB) data to the regional IEI team

##### Sea Carriers:

- Where the carrier has an outstanding debt in respect of charges incurred under the ICLA or Section 40 of the I&AA, the Home Office will expect prompt payment of those liabilities. Where the carrier account has entered aged debt, that is, debt in excess of 6 months requiring recovery action by the Home Office, the carrier will be excluded from applying for AGC accreditation on any new routes
- A document check must be conducted immediately prior to the passenger boarding, and include:
  - (i) A full check of the document must be undertaken to ensure that the document is valid, genuine, and that the person presenting it is the rightful holder

(ii) a visa check to confirm that a valid visa is held where required

- A high standard of co-operation with the Home Office (Immigration Liaison Manager / UK arrival port / Carriers Liaison Section)
- All document checks to be conducted by trained staff
- Accurate manifest checks to be in place, to show that the correct number of passengers have legitimately boarded the vessel
- Adequate security levels to ensure above checks cannot be circumvented.
- These arrangements may require inspection in advance by a Home Office Representative, at the carrier's expense

#### Who can apply for AGC Status?

We will consider applications from all carriers who operate routes on a permanent basis.

#### Can I apply for AGC status on all routes we operate on?

AGC status may be granted on permanent international routes to the UK. Domestic flights are not covered by this agreement (and you will not face any potential charges on these routes anyway). You must make an AGC application for each route you want AGC status on. For example, if you fly from Madrid to Heathrow, Gatwick, and Manchester, you put in a single application for your Madrid – UK service. If granted, AGC status applies to all of your flights out of Madrid to any UK airport. You need to repeat this process for all other routes you wish AGC status to apply to.

#### What if the flight/ship stops off on route to the UK?

If passengers are able to join the service other than at the port to which the AGC application applies, approval can only be considered if the intermediate or originating airport also benefits from AGC status. So, if you fly from Muscat to London via Abu Dhabi (and passengers are able to join in Abu Dhabi) you would have to apply for AGC status at both Muscat and Abu Dhabi.

#### What if the route is seasonal?

It is unlikely that seasonal routes will be eligible, as their short-term nature prevents us from assessing performance over the 6-month qualifying period (see below). Additionally, the physical environment and handling agents often change from season to season. However, if a seasonal route has historically held AGC status, and can evidence ongoing stability in operation, performance, and resource, CLS may exceptionally consider an application on a case-by-case basis.

#### Can I apply for AGC status straightaway?

If you are applying for AGC status on an established route (i.e. a route which has been operational for more than six months), then yes you can apply for AGC status straightaway. However, if you are applying for AGC status on a newly established route, we ask that you wait 6 months before applying for AGC status. This gives the route time to become established and also allows us an opportunity to monitor performance.

#### How do I actually make an AGC application?

All AGC applications must be made using the official application form which can be found at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/application-for-approved-gate-check-status>

Alternatively, you can send an e-mail to CLS and we will forward an application form to you. Please ensure that you fully complete the form. It is especially important that you provide suggested inspection dates so that we can process your application as quickly as possible.

[carriersliaisonsection@homeoffice.gov.uk](mailto:carriersliaisonsection@homeoffice.gov.uk)

#### How much does it cost to apply for AGC status?

The Home Office does not charge for AGC status applications. Carriers however are expected to meet costs arising from flights, food, and necessary accommodation for Home Office officials, to enable them to carry out an inspection of your operations where required. In accordance with current guidelines, flights over ten hours in duration would require the equivalent of business class seats.

#### How long does it take to receive AGC Status?

Once you submit your application form to CLS, we will write back to acknowledge receipt. We then aim to complete the full consideration process within 8 weeks. Where a physical gate inspection is required, CLS will contact the regional Immigration Liaison Manager who will then make arrangements with you directly. Wherever possible, this should also be completed within the 8-week timeframe. If your application is then successful, accreditation will be granted from the date of the decision or date of inspection.

#### If the Home Office decide to carry out an Inspection, what does this involve?

On your initial application form we ask you to provide prospective dates when an AGC inspection could take place. We will contact you to confirm availability. An inspector will then travel to your station to carry out the AGC inspection. On the

day of the inspection, we will look at the general layout of the port and the overall security of the facility. We will observe check in (where applicable) and gate procedures and talk to some of your agents to check their understanding/awareness of UK documentary requirements. We will also observe the final gate check to see what checks are made prior to final embarkation.

**What happens once the Home Office have completed an inspection?**

Once any AGC inspection has been completed, a report will be prepared by the inspector and submitted to the Carriers Liaison Section. We will then make a decision as to whether or not to grant AGC status. You should normally expect to hear from us within two weeks, and if your application is successful, accreditation will be backdated to the date of inspection.

**What happens if the Home Office decline the AGC application?**

Prior to making any AGC application, we encourage all carriers to ensure that they are aware of the AGC criteria. If after careful consideration of your application, we decline to proceed, we will write to you giving full reasons for this. We will also make practical suggestions as to how you can meet the AGC criteria and we will offer our full support and that of the Immigration Liaison Manager (ILM) if they are available in your area. It may be that only minor changes are needed and we will do everything possible to enable your application to proceed.

**What happens once AGC status has been granted?**

AGC accreditation is open-ended, subject to a review to risk policy, details as below. However, newly accredited routes will routinely be reviewed after an initial period of 6 months, to ensure compliance.

**Will the Home Office carry out further inspections following accreditation?**

We do not anticipate a need to conduct further inspections as a matter of course. However, on occasions if we feel performance is significantly deteriorating, we may decide that an inspection is necessary. We may also need to re-inspect if there have been any material changes to your operation, for example a change of port. Expenses relating to further inspections would fall to the carrier.

We will also ask our ILM to observe gate checks on a regular basis and we will observe procedures if we pass through an AGC station during our normal travels. The Home Office may also look to carry out “spot-checks” in the future on AGC routes to ensure standards are being maintained.

**What changes of circumstances do I need to tell you about?**

You need to advise us of the following:

- If the handling agent or document checking company are changed
- New check-in procedures are introduced or changed
- If the operation moves to a new terminal or airport building
- If transit stops are added to or dropped from the route
- If any changes to the document checking procedures are made
- The number of flights operated on the route changes
- Services on the route are suspended

Failure to inform us of any of these changes may affect the retention of AGC status at the station concerned.

#### Can AGC status be lost?

AGC status is subject to a review-to-risk policy. Where Border Force or Immigration Enforcement International colleagues reports any concerns to CLS, or where routine analysis of Inadequately Documented Arrival events at the UK border illustrate any issues, CLS will conduct a performance review of the route. Where necessary, this may include cancellation of AGC status. Cancellation would be a last resort and we would first work closely with you to try and improve performance. If AGC status was terminated, it would of course be open to you to apply for AGC status again, however you would have to wait at least 6 months before re-applying.

#### What happens to AGC status if the route suspends operations?

Where a route suspends its operations for 6 months or more, AGC will also be suspended. You can apply for this suspension to be lifted after 3 months of revived operations, by completing the proforma at the link below and submitting to CLS for consideration. Where material changes have taken place since the initial suspension, we may require further information from you. Where changes have been exceptional and substantial, we may require a completely fresh application.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/application-for-approved-gate-check-status>

#### Where can I get further information on AGC status?

You can contact the Carriers Liaison Section directly via e-mail at

[carriersliaisonsection@homeoffice.gov.uk](mailto:carriersliaisonsection@homeoffice.gov.uk)

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