

Unmanned Aircraft System Operations – Model Aircraft Operations Policy and Guidance

CAP 722F



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Civil Aviation Authority
Aviation House
Beehive Ring Road
Crawley
West Sussex
RH6 0YR

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Revision History

First Edition AUG 2021

Initial issue. Information has been extracted and updated from CAP 658 in accordance with the regulatory changes within ANO 2016, as amended, and the introduction of the UAS Implementing Regulation. This edition brings policy and guidance for model aircraft into the CAP 722 UAS suite of documents.

Foreword

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to:

- Describe the how the unmanned aircraft system (UAS) regulatory framework applies to the operation of model aircraft;
- Set out CAA policy for model aircraft operations;
- Describe the boundaries between operations which require an authorisation and those that do not;
- Provide guidance to model aircraft associations when applying for an authorisation on behalf of their members.

Note:

This CAP is not intended to provide operational guidance on the flying of model aircraft. This guidance should be contained within model aircraft association handbooks and other such documentation.

Intended Audience

This CAP is intended to be read by:

- Current Model Aircraft Associations;
- Associations wishing to become a recognised Model Aircraft Association;
- Clubs affiliated with Model Aircraft Associations, and their members.

Content

The content of this CAP does not replace Civil Aviation Regulations, or procedures notified within the UK Aeronautical Information Publication (AIP).

Policy

Model aircraft are considered a subset of unmanned aircraft (UA). The regulations that apply to the flying of any UA are the same, regardless of how they are flown, however certain additional privileges can be enjoyed in some circumstances by remote pilots and operators of certain model aircraft.

Availability

The primary method of obtaining a copy of the latest version of CAP 722F is via the CAA website under the [publications](#) section.

The CAA has a system for publishing further information and guidance. This can be found on the CAA website under the [SkyWise system](#). This can be filtered by subject matter area.

Structure

CAP 722 is a suite of documents which describes the guidance and policy applicable to unmanned aircraft in the UK.

Point of Contact

Unless otherwise stated, all enquiries relating to this CAP must be made to:

RPAS Policy Team
General Aviation and RPAS Unit
Civil Aviation Authority
Safety and Airspace Regulation Group
Aviation House
Beehive Ring Road
Crawley
West Sussex
RH6 0YR

E-mail: uavenquiries@caa.co.uk

Editorial Practices

CAP 722F includes both requirements, and guidance.

Requirements are set out within blue boxes within each chapter.

Regulatory references, which support the requirement listed above, are included below in italics.

Terminology

The terms below are to be interpreted as follows:

- **‘Must’** / ‘must not’ indicates a mandatory requirement.
- **‘Should’** indicates a strong obligation (i.e. a person would need to provide clear justification for not complying with the obligation).
- **‘May’** indicates discretion.
- **‘Describe’** / **‘explain’** indicates the provision of logical argument and any available evidence that justifies a situation, choice or action.

Remotely piloted aircraft system (RPAS) is the CAA preferred terminology when referring to an aircraft, and its associated systems, that is remotely piloted. The regulation (ANO 2016 as amended, and UAS IR) refers to ‘unmanned aircraft’ (UA), and ‘unmanned aircraft systems’ (UAS), and so this is the terminology used within this policy and guidance document.

Abbreviations and Glossary of Terms

The Glossary and abbreviations for all CAP 722 series documents can now be found in a standalone publication, [CAP 722D](#).

CHAPTER 1 | General Information

1.1 Introduction

Model aircraft are considered a subset of unmanned aircraft systems (UAS), and fall under the same regulatory framework. The CAA recognises that there are differences between model aircraft and other UA, and regulates them in different ways. This document sets out the way that model aircraft are regulated within the UK and the CAA policy on model aircraft operations.

CAP 722F, refers only to model aircraft which, by definition, are used for sport and recreation. More general guidance and policy relating to the use of UAS is contained in CAP 722.

This document outlines the current regulatory framework applicable to model aircraft, how model aircraft associations may operate outside the usual UAS regulations, and CAA policy on authorising such operations.

1.2 Regulatory Framework

Model aircraft **must** be flown in accordance with the applicable regulatory requirements, including:

- UAS Implementing Regulation (including the conditions and limits of any authorisation issued by the CAA); and
- UAS Delegated Regulation; and
- Air Navigation Order 2016, as amended (ANO).

EU IR 2019/947, as retained in UK law, (The UAS Implementing Regulation)

EU IR 2019/945, as retained in UK law, (The UAS Delegated Regulation)

From 31 December 2020, the regulations contained within *Regulation (EU) 2019/947 as retained (and amended in UK domestic law) under the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018 - (The UAS Implementing Regulation, or 'UAS IR')* became applicable within the UK. These regulations overhaul the regulatory framework for UAS, and the ANO has been amended to remove requirements which are superseded by these regulations.

For model aircraft, the requirements are broadly similar, with a few notable exceptions. Model aircraft associations are now able to apply for an '[Article 16 Authorisation](#)', which will contain all authorisations, permissions and exemptions necessary. See Chapter 4.

The UAS IR introduces 3 categories of operation for unmanned aircraft, which are briefly summarised below for reference. Full details of these categories can be found in CAP 722.

- **Open** – There are 3 sub categories of operation in the Open category:¹ These requirements are summarised in factsheet [CAP 2012](#).
 - **A1:** ‘Over’ people;
 - **A2:** ‘Close’ to people;
 - **A3:** ‘Far’ from people;
- **Specific** – Operations authorised in accordance with a safety case, based on risk. See CAP 722.
 - Model aircraft operations conducted under an Article 16 Authorisation are contained within the Specific category.
- **Certified** – UAS operations involving: Transportation of people, transportation of dangerous goods where there is a high level of risk to third parties, flight over assemblies of people with a UA characteristic dimension of 3m or more, or any other sufficiently high-risk operation.

Model aircraft not operated under an Article 16 Authorisation predominantly fit within the Open A3 category. The CAA has previously issued a number of permissions and exemptions to model aircraft associations, for example, to permit flight above 400ft. There are no longer any general exemptions/permissions in place, and instead these will need to be contained within an Article 16 Authorisation, which will allow members of respective associations to enjoy such privileges, and operate outside the usual limits of the Open category.

1.3 Definition of a Model Aircraft

The CAA has adopted the following two definitions, set out in CAP 722D and repeated here for reference:

Model aircraft – *An unmanned aircraft used for sporting and recreational purposes, flown by direct control inputs made by the remote pilot without any autonomous capability other than for flight stabilisation purposes.*

Note:

*The definition of a model aircraft may include multi-rotor type ‘drones’. Any unmanned aircraft being flown in accordance with the definition above is considered a model aircraft. The use of any automation, such as automatic flight modes which alter the position of the aircraft, places the operation outside the definition of a model aircraft, and therefore outside the scope of Article 16. The aircraft **must** be flown with direct control inputs from the remote pilot.*

¹ These are the basic Open category requirements. Other transitional requirements also exist, which can be found in CAP 722 and are summarised in [CAP 2012](#).

It is acknowledged that many unmanned aircraft have built in failsafe modes, which may be activated in some instances, for example- loss of control link. Activation of such a mode, although possibly automatic in nature, does not necessarily place the aircraft outside the scope of the definition of a model aircraft.

Large model aircraft – A model aircraft with a maximum take-off mass greater than 25kg.

CHAPTER 2 | Regulation

This chapter builds on the regulatory introduction in Chapter 1 and describes the regulation of model aircraft in detail.

2.1 Regulation that Applies to Model Aircraft

The requirements of the UAS Implementing Regulation and UAS Delegated Regulation apply, along with a number of regulations within the Air Navigation Order 2016, as amended. These are explained within CAP 722.

Consolidated versions of the regulations can be found as follows:

- The UAS Implementing Regulation: [CAP 1789A](#);
- The UAS Delegated Regulation: [CAP 1789B](#);
- The 2020 amendment to the ANO: [CAP 2013](#).

ANO Article 23 excludes unmanned aircraft operated in the **Open** and **Specific** categories from the majority of the Air Navigation Order. [Table 1](#) lists those ANO articles which **do** still apply to all categories of UAS operation.

ANO Article Number	Description
2	Interpretation
91	Dropping articles for purposes of agriculture etc. and grant of aerial application certificates
92	Mooring, tethering, towing, use of cables, etc
93	Release of small balloons
94A	Certain unmanned aircraft: permission for flights that are over or near aerodromes
94B	Interpretation of expressions used in the definition of “flight restriction zone”
94BA	Certain unmanned aircraft: permission for flights that are over or near space sites
239	Power to prohibit or restrict flying
241	Endangering safety of any person or property
257	CAA’s power to prevent aircraft flying (Except 257(2)(a))
253	Revocation, suspension and variation of certificates, licences and other documents