
Commercial Checkride Gouge

Date: February 2020

The Oral Exam

The checkride began around 1 p.m., and the examiner simply started asking about my career goals. We talked about the direction I was wanting to go towards during the immediate future as well as some of the long term plans I had made. I think this time was simply an ice breaker to calm nerves. However, I treated it as a talk about aviation, so I had a fun time discussing it.

The first true part of the oral came in the form of what are the documents required to be airworthy from both a plane and pilot perspective. We discussed each of the documents needed, whom they were issued by, and the duration of the validity. The examiner wanted to know about maintenance on aircraft with respect to commercial operations (the annual, the 100 hour, and the progressive inspections), and what type of mechanic is approved for each inspection. He wanted me to show him where the inspections were denoted in the three different log books. He also wanted to know what currency the pilot has to meet to be legal (3 landings every 90 days, biennial review, ect). Since I am also an IFR rated pilot, I had to give those currency standards as well.

The second section of the oral had to do with the VFR sectional chart. This was very similar to the private pilot checkride in that he asked questions about different symbols on the map and what they mean. He used this as a segway into VFR visibility requirements for all classes of airspace. We did not talk about special VFR however. We also did not talk about speed restrictions although I would suggest knowing that information. We did dive into the privileges a commercial pilot can exercise for hire. We also discussed the concept on holding out. Basically he wanted to know the difference between common and private carriage.

The third section of the oral exam focused on aircraft systems. The examiner wanted to know about the engine in the plane, how it was aspirated, how it was cooled, the power rating, ect. After that we discussed the prop and how the governor works. He wanted to know what would happen to the prop in the event of a loss of oil pressure. Next we discussed the electrical system. I had to start what type of system (24 V with a 28 V alternator). I had to tell him what functions ran off the electrical system. I went into more detail here than I needed to, but I enjoyed discussing this system. Essentially, the pilot should know about what avionics, lights, flaps, and pumps use electrical energy. The next system was the anti-ice/de-ice capability of the aircraft, which of course is simply the carb heat and pitot-heat system. The examiner wanted to know what are the signs of carburetor icing and how to remedy the situation. Next I had to explain the hydraulic and pneumatic systems in the aircraft. We focused first on the landing gear system. He wanted to know how the fluid moved through the system, and how the system operates when something is broken (broken pump). We discussed the pneumatic system in terms of what instruments run off of pneumatic (vacuum) power. This led into discussing the flight instruments, how they work, and what system controls different instruments (pitot-static vs vacuum vs electrical). The last system we discussed was the landing flaps. He wanted to know what type of flap the RG has (slotted) and how it runs (off of electrical power).

The final main section of the oral exam was over flight planning and weight & balance. Before the checkride, the examiner gave me a mission to fly from the departure point to KMSP. I had the flight plan done before I arrived, but he wanted me to use the POH to determine weight and balance, maximum range and power settings, and take off & landing distances over a 50 ft obstacle using the day's prevailing conditions. This was not difficult, but it was a bit time consuming. I also added that I gave a safety factor in fuel planning and takeoff/landing distances of 20%. I wanted to reassure the examiner that data in the POH is for ideal conditions and thus I was compensating for less-than-ideal conditions. He did ask about spin awareness and recovery techniques, but I forgot which portion of the test he asked about that.

The Flight Exam

The flight portion of the exam was as to be expected with no surprises. I had to fly every maneuver, and I will list them below in order of when I flew it.

Conditions: The day was VFR with a prevailing surface wind of 18010G20 on takeoff and 20010G20 during the final portion of the exam. The winds at 3000 ft were quite a bit stiffer which made the ride a little bumpier, but nonetheless it was a great day.

The order of maneuvers:

1. Normal takeoff procedure
2. Clearing turns
3. Steep turns
4. Power-Off approach stall
5. Power-On departure stall
6. Accelerated stall
7. Chandelle (to the right)
8. Lazy-8
9. Steep spiral
10. 8s on pylons
11. Normal landings
12. Soft-field takeoff and landing
13. Short-field takeoff and landing
14. Accuracy (180 Power-off) landing

*It is good to note that I asked before each maneuver that was not in the pattern if a clearing turn was needed.

At the end of it, I was certified as a commercial pilot. Good luck to all applicants who read this on their journey!