

Course Name: Aviation Safety and Mental Health

Course Provider: Nordic Flight Department

Course Description:

Mental health (MH) is increasingly recognised as an important component of aviation safety, operational performance and organisational resilience. This course provides an evidence-informed overview of the relationship between mental health, human performance and aviation safety. In the course, participants will be introduced to relevant research on MH-related performance effects, wellbeing, aviation accidents and rare high-consequence events (such as aircraft-assisted murder-suicides), alongside the requirements and guidance materials of national and international aviation authorities and organisations.

The course also explores practical areas, including aeromedical considerations, the role of peer support programs, Safety Management Systems (SMS), wellbeing culture, and approaches to supporting help-seeking while maintaining operational safety. Participants will be introduced to relevant guidance materials, case studies and examples from aviation and other safety-critical industries.

Particularly suitable for those working with Safety Management Systems, including safety managers, safety officers, operational managers and others responsible for safety oversight and organisational wellbeing.

Dates: 8-10 December 2026, 6-8 April 2027 (3 days, 11:00-16:00 GMT)

Location: Online

Recognition: Half course

Learning Objectives:

1. Explain the relationship between mental health, human performance and aviation safety, including the potential impact of mental health conditions, substance misuse, wellbeing and psychosocial factors on operational performance.
2. Identify key mental health-related risks and safety concerns in aviation, including aircraft-assisted suicide, murder-suicide, self-harm and other rare but high-consequence events.
3. Describe the aeromedical, regulatory and organisational approaches to mental health in aviation, including relevant guidance, peer support programmes, help-seeking considerations and examples from other safety-critical industries.
4. Apply Safety Management System principles to mental health and operations, including the identification of hazards, consideration of risk controls, promotion of wellbeing culture and development of appropriate organisational responses.

Detailed Course Content

This course provides a structured, evidence-informed examination of mental health as a factor in aviation safety, operational performance and organisational resilience. The course is designed to provide participants with a working understanding of the principal mental health-related hazards relevant to aviation, the mechanisms through which mental health may affect performance and safety, and the organisational, aeromedical and regulatory measures available to identify, manage and mitigate associated risks.

The course begins with an introduction to the role of mental health within aviation safety. Participants will review key terminology and foundational concepts relating to mental health, psychological wellbeing, mental disorders, psychosocial stressors and occupational functioning. Particular attention will be given to distinguishing between mental health, mental illness, wellbeing and temporary distress, and to understanding why these concepts are relevant within safety-sensitive occupations.

Core safety considerations will subsequently be introduced, including hazard identification, risk levels, severity, mitigation, human performance and organisational safety. These concepts will provide the framework for considering mental health within an aviation Safety Management System (SMS), rather than treating mental health solely as an individual clinical or aeromedical issue.

The course will examine serious and high-consequence mental health-related events in aviation. This will include aircraft-assisted suicide, aircraft-assisted murder-suicide, deliberate self-harm and other instances of suicide or suicidal behaviour involving aviation personnel. Relevant cases and research will be considered to identify potential contributory factors, limitations in available evidence, and implications for prevention and organisational safety management. The course will emphasise the importance of proportionate risk assessment when considering events that may be rare but potentially severe in consequence.

Substance misuse and substance use disorders among aviation personnel will also be addressed. Participants will consider the potential effects of alcohol, psychoactive and psychotropic substances and problematic use on cognition, decision-making, behavior, performance and operational safety. The course will discuss substance misuse within the wider context of mental health, occupational stress, help-seeking and safety-sensitive work.

A dedicated section will examine the relationship between mental health and human performance. Participants will review how psychological distress, common mental health conditions, fatigue/stress, impaired sleep, substance use and other pressures may influence attention, decision-making, situational awareness, communication, executive functioning, interpersonal behaviour and other areas of operational performance. The course will also consider protective factors, resilience and wellbeing, recognising that mental health exists on a continuum and that reduced wellbeing does not necessarily equate to clinical disorder or operational incapacity.

Aeromedical considerations will be reviewed to provide participants with an understanding of how mental health may be addressed through medical certification and fitness-for-duty processes. This section will examine the general purposes of aeromedical assessment, the management of identified conditions, the role of treating and evaluating professionals, and the relationship between individual health assessment and broader aviation safety objectives. Relevant national and international regulatory and guidance frameworks will be introduced where applicable.

The course will examine peer support programmes as an organisational approach to supporting mental health, early help-seeking and access to appropriate care. Participants will consider the role, scope and limitations of peer support, including confidentiality, referral pathways, escalation procedures, governance, peer training and the relationship between peer support and professional mental health services. Attention will be given to how effective peer support can contribute to a positive reporting and wellbeing culture while recognising situations that require specialist intervention or formal safety action.

Mental health approaches used in other safety-critical industries will also be reviewed. Examples may be drawn from sectors such as healthcare, emergency services, transportation and other high-reliability environments. These examples will be used to compare approaches to psychological fitness, occupational wellbeing, peer support, return-to-work, risk management and organisational responsibility, and to identify practices that may be relevant or transferable to aviation.

A central component of the course will examine the integration of mental health considerations into Safety Management Systems. Participants will consider how mental health-related factors may be identified as hazards, how associated risks may be assessed, and how preventive and mitigating controls may be developed. This will include consideration of reporting systems, confidential support mechanisms, organisational culture, access to psychological services, psychoeducation, awareness building, monitoring and continuous improvement.

The course will also examine the role of organisational wellbeing culture and the relationship between safety, trust and help-seeking. Participants will consider barriers that may discourage aviation personnel from accessing healthcare or psychological support, including concerns regarding confidentiality, stigma, professional consequences or loss of medical certification. Organisational approaches that support appropriate help-seeking while maintaining operational safety will be discussed.

Participants will be introduced to available guidance and resource materials from relevant aviation authorities, international organisations and professional bodies. The course will consider how such guidance may be used to support organisational policy, peer support, mental health services, risk management and SMS processes. Case studies and practical examples will be incorporated throughout the course to demonstrate how principles may be applied in operational settings.

The final section of the course will consider emerging issues and future developments in aviation mental health. This will include evolving approaches to regulation, aeromedical assessment, psychological support, organisational wellbeing, peer support and the integration of mental health information into proactive safety management. Participants will be encouraged to consider how the material covered during the course may be incorporated into existing organisational safety, wellbeing and operational management systems.

Overall, the course is intended to enable participants to understand mental health not solely as a medical or individual issue, but as a multidisciplinary aviation safety consideration involving human performance, organisational culture, aeromedical processes, peer support, regulation and Safety Management Systems.

Learning Assessment

1. Participation: Each of the 12 modules includes group work through breakout rooms, case study analysis or experiential discussions.
2. Competence: Quizzes are used at the end of the day, asking about broad topics covered in that part.

Documentation

1. Full attendance is required to receive a Course Certificate.
2. Participants must pass at least 2 of 3 daily quizzes.
3. Successfully completing the course rewards a Certificate of Completion.

Quality Assurances

1. Attendees are given a Course Evaluation and Feedback to fill out at the end of the course.
2. Attendees are informed of standard of EAAP-recognition and available avenues to register a complaint or concern to the association.

Cost

1. €875 for non-EAAP members
2. €725 for EAAP members.
3. **Note** – there is no VAT on Icelandic training courses