

Executive Summary

This quarter has been a relatively busy one for the Division – largely dominated by staffing changes and the running of WorldFlight.

Staffing Changes

This quarter saw VP APAC appoint myself as the Division Director – a position that I am very proud to hold. With my appointment, the Deputy Division Director role has fallen vacant – we have recently gone out to market for a new DDD and hope to hold interviews in the New Year.

The Community Engagement Director position remains vacant, with the intent being to re-evaluate the role and go out to market in the New Year.

There have been no other changes to Board-level positions over this period.

I would once again like to thank Mark Richards, our previous Division Director, for the time and effort he has put in over his time at various levels of VATSIM leadership.

Membership

The membership of the Division currently stands at 1,187 members – composed of 393 active and 794 inactive members. This marks a minor decline over the previous reporting period.

The Future of the Division

In being appointed to this role, I have begun a scope of work to assess and further stabilise our division's operations. This started with a one-on-one meeting with each Portfolio Director to get an honest overview of the state of each department – what's working, what's not, and what's blocking the path to success. These were completed mid-December and will inform each department's immediate focal points for the next six months. This also leads into a longer-term strategy, looking out to the two-year point.



My high-level priorities for the next six months are –

- Continue to plan for leadership continuity in each portfolio and enable each Director to operate at the strategic level, rather than the day-to-day tactical level.
- Develop and publish the Divisional Policy, codifying routine division operations. This will introduce stability at the highest level, and act as a senior policy to departmental policies.
- Develop the Training and Operation domain policies.
- Review and update existing division-level policies, including the Discord, Staff Conduct and Data policies. These policies may be consolidated or embodied into other policies.
- Investigate the path forward our current software services stack, with a view to lowering the technical barrier for new staff.
- Closer collaboration with VATPAC – both at the Division Director level, and the Portfolio Director level.

Following my one-on-ones with the Portfolio Directors, I am confident that we have the right people, in the right places, with the right attributes. There is a fair amount of work ahead of us, but I am optimistic that we can make significant progress in the next few months.

Tom Kilpatrick

Division Director



Operations Department

Q4 has been another relatively quiet quarter for the Operations Department, with two small AIRAC cycles.

Standard Operating Procedures

This quarter we made 14 commits to the site primarily updates based on AIRAC cycle changes and contributions from the Events Department for World Flight 2025 events information. As it stands there are currently 22 open issues, with no issues closed or completed this quarter.

The community is encouraged to reach out the Operations Team if they wish to commit to the SOPs project.

Controller Datasets

Cycle 2510 and 2512 were completed this quarter. These cycles were reasonably small with no major aerodrome changes.

The Combined Oceanic dataset had an update thanks to the hard work of Tom Kilpatrick for World Flight 2025. The plan is that some of the changes made will remain with some extra tidy up planned for a future AIRAC update.

Many thanks to our provider, Aeropath, for continued access to the ANR data package ahead of its release.

Staff Members

This quarter has seen the onboarding of new Operations Team member Adam Baikie. Adam has a great background that I'm sure will prove an asset to the VATNZ Operations Department.

Name	Position
Operations Director	Richard Bywater
Airspace Manager	Vacant
Operations Team Members	Connor Sumner
	James Stuart
	Adam Baikie



Booking Systems Project

The Operations Department has commenced work on the uplift of a Booking System for Controllers. With the demise of vRoute a few years back, VATNZ have been operating with an atc-requests Discord channel which is clunky and requires manual work to keep clean. Due to the freeform nature it leads to duplicate and incomplete booking information which has caused confusion in the community previously.

Adam Baikie has begun putting together a Discord Bot to create the ability to create a booking in Discord in a structured and well managed manner. The goal is that the department works with the IT Department to stand up a web-based booking instance as well – allowing for the sharing of data to VATSIM's Booking API to provide greater visibility across the Pilot community of upcoming controller bookings with tools like VATSIM Radar.

We hope to go live with the first Discord-only based drop early in 2026 and subsequent deliveries will be planned between the departments.

Finishing Statement

With Adam's arrival, the Operations Team is currently running with a little more capability than previously although effort is still required to streamline our current processes to make things faster and easier with the end goal of making it so processes can easily be shared across the team. Real-life commitments have continued to get in the way of being able to plan some of this work but hopefully 2026 will provide a bit more time.

I encourage the community to help contribute to items like the SOPs project and provide feedback/ideas to help us be able to deliver enjoyment and (where practical) realism into flying in VATNZ Division airspace on the VATSIM network.

Richard Bywater

Operations Director



Training Department

Staff Members

Currently, the Training Department consists of ten trainers, with six holding either an I1 or I3 rating.

The department remains understaffed, with a critical shortage of at least three mentors.

Consequently, the wait time to be assigned a mentor is around 12-15 weeks.

There is a standing call for expressions of interest to train to become a Mentor. The minimum qualification is an S3 rating, however there are not enough S3s graduating currently.

Students

- Theory:** There are currently 36 students (Division members and Visiting Controllers) enrolled across the syllabus. A further 12 students have completed their theory exam requirements and are awaiting mentor assignment.
- Practical:** There are currently 28 students (Division members and Visiting Controllers) currently undertaking practical training across the syllabus. 15 students have recently been purged from training due to a lack of engagement with VATSIM over the preceding 12 months.

The following ratings have been awarded during this reporting period:

Rating / Endorsement	Number Awarded
S1 (Developing Controller)	2
S2 (Aerodrome Controller)	3
S3 (Terminal Controller)	1
C1 (Enroute Controller)	0
Tier 2 Endorsement (Procedural Tower)	0
Tier 1 Endorsement (Oceanic)	0



Policy

The revised training policy is still a work in progress, with no estimated completion date currently.

The division of training management into a director (responsible for policy and oversight) and a manager (responsible for operational matters) is working well.

The departmental Strategic Development Management Plan is still a work in progress, but many of the features required have been identified and developed. Hopeful of a March 2026 completion date.

Syllabus

The S1 syllabus is currently under review. It is expected that the department will recommend to the Board that we move to naming the courses their functional position, rather than their rating - that is, there will be Aerodrome, Approach, and Enroute courses.

The current proposal is to blend the S1 and S2 syllabi into the Aerodrome course, with practical training and examinations taking place in a simulated environment. This is akin to how VATNZ did it before 2021, so this is nothing new. With this proposal, the S1 solo will be removed.

The exact methods and sequencing of assessments is still in development, but it will include a period of over-the-shoulder training on the network with their Mentor. The final details of the proposal will be assessed at the Board-level before implementation.

Activities

SweatBox training files are continually updated and aligned with specific training exercises concurrent with the training refresh project. The training files are now hosted in a GitHub repository, with nearly all the lessons now included in the repo. Thanks to James Stuart and Fenton Loveday, who continue to drive this. The practical exam files with supporting documentation for S1, S2, S3, and C1 are now complete.

The project to upgrade the training materials into a more modern format is on hold while all options are considered. The department's administrative functions are not part of this upgrade.

We are working with our VATPAC friends to develop a differences course. This work is being led by them, for which we are grateful.

Closing

As always, there's a lot left to do, but we're continuing to work hard on improvements.



Thanks once again to the trainers, who give up their valuable time to train our prospective controllers. It can feel thankless, but your work does not go unnoticed. A special mention to Fenton Loveday, whose support and knowledge has helped steer the department immeasurably.

See you all in 2026!

Gary Parata

Training Director



Events Department

Q4 has been very busy with World Flight rounding out our year. The Summer iteration of Cross the Ditch was cancelled - a joint decision between VATNZ and VATPAC due to the heavy load from World Flight a month before.

Christchurch Control (Night Shift)

Christchurch control has been running well, with reasonable turnouts from both pilots and controllers. Unfortunately, staff time constraints limited the ability for many of the events to be posted to the VATSIM Events calendar which may have limited pilot numbers. The week of the 2/11 was World Flight and so our efforts were towards supporting that major event rather than Christchurch Control.

05/10	12/10	19/10	26/10	2/11	9/11	16/11	23/11	30/11	7/12	14/12	Avg
41	44	60	43	WF	45	38	52	35	37	67	46.2

24 Hours of VATSIM

VATNZ hosted 24 Hours of VATIM in October, with a leg between Auckland and Christchurch. This was a busy event, with a good turnout from both pilots and controllers.

World Flight 2025

We welcomed World Flight back to New Zealand and Antarctica this year with the route into Auckland, hopping down to Christchurch, and then the longer leg to Phoenix Field. With 450 aircraft through New Zealand and 104 through Phoenix the controllers were kept very busy.

Future

The events team is looking forward to the new year and what it will bring. With us finally having a nearly full events team we are keen to get things moving next year and bring you all more exciting events. From the events team Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Tom Lyall

Events Director

