**FSX21 Exercise Controller Guidance Note**

*The purpose of the exercise controller guidance note is to guide the work of the exercise controller.*

*The controller is responsible for the management of the exercise team, including all the facilitators, observers and evaluators.*

*This role starts with briefings on the exercise, includes all aspects of managing the exercise, and ends with the post-exercise report.*

***The simulation will be implemented by the exercise management team, under the leadership of the simulation exercise controller.***

The exercise controller controls the exercise by managing the inject matrix (run sheet); adjusting the timing of the injects (pace); and directing the facilitation team to deliver planned or ad hoc injects (additional pieces of information that are developed during the exercise) to advance, slow, or redirect exercise play as required by the objectives**.**

**The failure of an exercise** occurs when participants are not fully engaged, due either to a lack of realism in the injects, or in the expected outputs. The exercise is considered a failure when it focuses only on gaps and failures and fails to recognise the capacity and strengths in systems and people (opportunities); or when it leaves participants frustrated, demoralized, disempowered or scared of failure.

**The success of an exercise** is often in the lessons identified and occurs when participants discover and use the ability to find a way to strengthen the system or plans.

**Terms of reference (TOR)**

This role requires the exercise controller to be fully prepared in all aspects of the exercise, and to work closely with the exercise management team to ensure that the exercise is conducted in a professional and timely manner.

The exercise controller must maintain a strategic view of the exercise and not be involved in delivering injects. His or her job is to guide, delegate, solve problems and meet challenges with the exercise management team during the exercise. Throughout the exercise, he or she must keep the exercise management team focused on the objective, and maintain a safe learning environment for participants.

**Some points to guide the work of the exercise controller:**

**Starting the exercise**

* Ensure that the exercise management team is fully briefed on the exercise objectives; the nature of the participants; the evaluation process; the scenario and inject matrix; the relevant roles and responsibilities; the control room; and the communication arrangements.
* Ensure all technology is tested and ready for the exercise.
* Ensure that the control room is set up and that all facilitators know their roles and responsibilities.
* Ensure that no information is leaked outside the exercise. It is important to avoid creating panic with a fake scenario.
* Have the exercise objectives, the inject matrix and other key reference material (maps, CONOPS, stock lists, etc.) readily available and displayed on the wall in the exercise control room.

**Conducting the exercise**

* Ensure the exercise starts and engages all participants.
* Ensure the exercise management team is comfortable and has food, drink and breaks as needed.
* Maintain situational awareness of what the participants and exercise management team are doing at all times. Track participants’ key tasks and deliverables visually in the control room. This allows the exercise management team to assess progress at a glance and know quickly what context they are working in.
* Keep the inject matrix to hand at all times to guide your task:
  + Remember that the participants do not know the exercise plan (inject matrix), and will respond to input and direction from the exercise controller
  + Keep the exercise aim and objectives, and exercise safety, at the forefront of decision-making
  + The exercise will take on a life of its own; the exercise controller will need to guide it by managing the inject matrix
  + It is not essential to use all the drafted or planned injects: adapt to the participants
  + Use injects to increase the pace, pressure or urgency of the exercise
  + Give participants a reasonable amount of time in which to complete the tasks requested of them
  + For any major changes or critical failures to the exercise plan, discuss possible responses with the exercise director before making a joint decision.
  + Cross off injects as they are delivered and add ad hoc injects as they are created
  + The exercise controller has the final call on injects and on the pace of the exercise*.*
* All members of the exercise management team and all participants must be kept updated on the exercise timeline, including through clear communication of deadlines and time jumps.
* Ensure constant communication within the exercise management team (**this is very important**). Have regular “check-in” meetings to ensure everyone is on track, up-to-date, and aware of exercise progress, any issues, and any changes in play or timings.
* Ensure the location of all team members is known at all times. If the controller needs to step out of the control room, they must either re-direct their team to their new location, or appoint someone to take on their role in their absence.

**Ending the exercise**

* Do not keep people longer than agreed - The controller will end the exercise when the time is up, the objectives are all met, or there is a real emergency (safety first).
* Ensure that all locations, tasks and teams are clearly communicated so that when the exercise is over the management team and participants know what actions to take (e.g. meet at x location for an initial debrief, pack up specific equipment, close the EOC and/or end all exercise communication).

**Post-exercise**

* Lead or support the initial participant hot wash of the exercise directly after the exercise ends
* Ensure that all issued equipment is returned and the exercise control room is packed up
* Bring the exercise management team together for a separate hot wash of the exercise
* Review the plan for the participant debrief workshop with the lead evaluator and facilitators
* Support or lead participant debrief sessions as required
* Debrief the exercise management team on the exercise conduct (as a group and/or individually)
* Share initial results to key stakeholders as required
* Support or lead the writing of the post-exercise report.