



Guidance Note on applying for a Groundhandling Approval

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Irish Aviation Authority ('IAA') is the competent authority in Ireland for the purposes of Council Directive 96/67/EC on access to the Groundhandling Market at Community airports. The Directive has been implemented into Irish Law by the European Communities (Access to the Groundhandling market at Community airports) Regulations, 1998 (S.I. No. 505 of 1998). Copies of the relevant legislation can be found on our website at,

<https://www.iaa.ie/commercial-aviation/groundhandling>
- 1.2 The Directive was intended as a first step towards the gradual opening up of the Groundhandling market to help reduce the operating costs of air carriers, to improve quality of services and to facilitate effective competition in the market.
- 1.3 Groundhandling broadly comprises all those services required by an aircraft between landing and take-off (e.g. marshalling aircraft, loading/unloading, refuelling, baggage handling, passenger handling, aircraft maintenance etc.). An airline may choose to provide services for itself (self-handling), or contract with another company (third party handling), be it an airline or a dedicated Groundhandling company.
- 1.4 Prior approval must be obtained from IAA before engaging in groundhandling operations¹. There is an application process in place and the application form is available to download from IAA's website at,

<https://www.iaa.ie/commercial-aviation/groundhandling/apply-for-an-approval>
- 1.5 You will find the full list of approved groundhandlers on the IAA's website at:

<https://www.iaa.ie/commercial-aviation/groundhandling/approval-holders>
- 1.6 Groundhandling Approvals are issued for a period of five years and approval is subject to the holder satisfying certain conditions at all times. Monitoring is carried out on an annual basis to ensure holders of Groundhandling Approvals continue to comply with the relevant requirements of the legislation and the terms and conditions of the Grant of Approval.

¹ Note that the provisions of the Groundhandling Regulations relating to the requirement to seek prior approval before engaging in groundhandling activities only applies at airports whose annual traffic is not less than 1 million passenger movements or 25,000 tonnes of freight. Currently, the requirement to apply for an approval prior to engaging in groundhandling operations only applies at Dublin, Shannon and Cork Airports.

2. Conditions for granting a Groundhandling Approval

2.1 In order to be eligible for a Groundhandling Approval, an applicant must meet the relevant requirements as set out under Section 12 (3) of S.I. 505 of 1998 as follows:

- a) is competent as respects experience, financial resources, equipment, organisation, staffing, maintenance and operating procedures to ensure the security and safety of installations, of aircraft, of equipment and of persons,*
- b) is adequately insured to cover liability in respect of employees, passengers, luggage, cargo, mail and third parties, and*
- c) in respect of its employees, complies with the requirements of the Acts mentioned in Schedule III.*

2.2 An applicant demonstrates compliance with the above requirements by completing IAA's application form. A further explanation of the information required under each section of the application form is outlined below:

- **Section 1: Ownership and Control-** applicant is required to state whether it is a sole trader, partnership or a Company incorporated under the Companies Act, 2014. Details on the ownership of the company, names of Directors and Company Secretary also required. Company Legal documents are supplied- i.e. copy of Constitution of the company, Certificate of Incorporation, Certificate of Registration of any trading/business names.
Note: In accordance with Regulation 7(2) of the European Communities (Access to the Groundhandling market at Community airports) Regulations, 1998, suppliers of groundhandling services are required to be established in the European Community.
- **Section 2: Nature of Business-** applicant states whether approval is sought for self-handling or third-party handling. Schedules I and II at the back of the form are completed and applicant confirms at what airports they intend to operate. In addition, applicants are also required to provide details of any groundhandling services to be provided by a subcontractor (*note that the subcontractor must also be a Groundhandling Approval holder*).
- **Section 3: Annual Accounts-** audited annual accounts for the two most recent financial years are required (if existing company).
- **Section 4: Business Plan²-** a business plan is required for the first **two years** of operation. The business plan should include the following particulars:
 - a) A detailed description of the applicant's projected activities, including details of any market research undertaken and the basis for projected turnover figures in the plan;

² The requirement to submit a business plan applies only to applicants seeking approval as a supplier of groundhandling services.

- b) Projected Profit & Loss Accounts and Balance Sheets (where applicable, a projected opening Balance Sheet should also be furnished);
- c) Projected statements of monthly cash flows;
- d) Details of existing and projected sources of finance, including:-
 - where appropriate, details of the start-up costs incurred and an explanation of how it is proposed to finance these costs;
 - details of the financing of proposed equipment purchase/leasing including, in the case of leasing, the terms and conditions of contract.
- e) details of any contracts secured to date along with any relevant back-up documentation;
- f) details of projected staffing levels.

In respect of (b) and (c) above, all workings and back-up for the figures provided must also be submitted, as the IAA will need to examine how the figures provided have been compiled. Ideally, a breakdown of all projected income/expenditure should be included. An example of some of the detail we expect to receive in respect of the projections is listed below:

-Revenue:

- Details of how income is built-up by contract (signed or projected)

-Expenditure:

- Salary costs, broken down by staff member/grade/role
- Training costs, broken down by staff member/grade/role
- Operating costs, such as equipment, fuel, insurance etc.
- Office costs, such as rent utilities etc.

Finally, a statement of confirmation from the applicant's Auditor is required confirming that he/she is satisfied that the projections and calculations made in the business plan, so far as the accounting policies and calculations are concerned, are properly compiled on foot of the accompanying assumptions made by the Applicant and are presented on a basis consistent with the accounting policies normally adopted by the Applicant.

Note: *In the case of a sole trader or a partnership, an audited statement of affairs of all of the applicant's assets and liabilities may be required.*

- *Section 5: Financial Resources-* This section only applies to applicants seeking approval for self-handling (i.e. airlines). A copy of the Operating Licence and Air Operators Certificate held by the company is required.
- *Section 6: Groundhandling Experience-* applicant provides details of any previous experience the company has in operating as a supplier of groundhandling services or as a self-handler. To include details on any previous approvals held, type of groundhandling activities and length such activities were engaged in.
- *Section 7: Technical Competence-*
 - Equipment: applicant is required to submit a list of the equipment available to it to undertake the groundhandling services it intends to provide and also a statement on their policy as regards the operating and maintenance procedures in relation to that equipment – e.g. ensure that all equipment (includes vehicles) is maintained in accordance with manufacturers recommendations and requirements. In addition, applicants should set out their policy on vehicle and equipment servicing (i.e. frequency etc.). Procedures for reporting maintenance problems etc. should also be documented.
 - Personnel: the applicant is required to furnish details on the number of staff to be engaged in the groundhandling activities proposed and their role. The skills level and corresponding training required for each role should be set out in a training programme/plan which is examined in detail (includes details on recurrent training). The applicant is also required to provide a signed statement (on company headed paper) confirming that no staff will be employed by the company without undertaking the appropriate training relevant to their duties.
 - Senior managerial staff: the names of senior managerial staff are required along with details of each individual's competence, experience and/or relevant qualifications. A copy of the company's Organisation Chart is also required.
 - Health and Safety: applicants are required to furnish a copy of their Safety Statement which must be prepared pursuant to Irish Health and Safety Legislation (i.e. Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act, 2005). A Risk Assessment must also be provided for all groundhandling activities which the company proposes to engage in. Guidelines on preparing Safety Statements and Risk Assessments can be obtained from the Irish Health and Safety Authority, at: http://www.hsa.ie/eng/Topics/Managing_Health_and_Safety/Safety_Statement_and_Risk_Assessment/.
- *Section 8: Insurance-* suppliers of groundhandling services and self- handling airport users are required to be adequately insured to cover liability in respect if employees, passengers, luggage, cargo, mail and third parties. Applicants must arrange for their insurer to complete the IAA's Insurance Declaration Form as provided with the application or it can also be accessed from our website at,

<https://www.iaa.ie/commercial-aviation/groundhandling/apply-for-an-approval>

The IAA applies certain minimum levels of insurance cover in respect of Public Liability, Employers Liability and Motor Cover as set out under the Rules of Conduct for Groundhandling as published by Dublin, Shannon and Cork Airports.

With regard to Motor Cover, please note that **all roads (including Airside) at a State Airport (Dublin, Cork and Shannon Airports) are deemed a public place** in accordance with relevant Irish legislation and must be insured accordingly. The groundhandler is required to possess a current motor insurance policy issued under or in compliance with the Irish Road Traffic Acts. The motor policy must include a specific extension permitting the groundhandler to use vehicles airside at airports.

- *Section 9: Social Legislation*- the applicant is required to provide a signed statement which confirms that, in respect of its employees, it will comply with the requirements of the legislation (as amended) set out under Schedule III of the Groundhandling Regulations which is included in the application form.
- *Section 10: Other Information*- emergency contact details for the company are required along with the names and contact details for the applicant's auditor/accountant and insurer.

3. How to apply for a Groundhandling Approval

- 3.1 Applications for a groundhandling approval must be made using the IAA's application form which is available on www.iaa.ie.

The application form is a fillable PDF form.

The IAA has produced a short guide to assist applicants in completing and navigating the form which can be downloaded from our website at, <https://www.iaa.ie/commercial-aviation/groundhandling/apply-for-an-approval>

- 3.2 The IAA welcomes pre-application meetings in order to understand more fully from applicants the type of operations proposed, to explain how the application process works and to respond to any queries applicants may have on the application process or on the relevant requirements of the Groundhandling Regulations.
- 3.3 Before completing the application form, applicants are advised to familiarise themselves with the relevant legislation applicable to groundhandling which is available to download from the IAA's website. In addition to the Grant of Approval from the IAA, applicants are also required to satisfy the particular requirements of the airport managing body at the relevant airport at which it is proposed to engage in groundhandling activities. A Groundhandling Requirements Form must be completed and submitted to the relevant airport managing body. Contact details for the Groundhandling units at Dublin, Cork and Shannon Airports are listed under Section 10 of this document.

Applicants should note that the IAA will notify the relevant airport authority on receipt of a fully submitted application and will forward certain information contained in that application to the airport authority for their information.

Applicants are advised that failure to maintain either satisfactory insurance cover, finances, management and organisation, or failure to meet the

required standards and comply at all times with the Rules of Conduct for Groundhandling of the relevant airport managing body, or failure to meet the requirements of National laws or Regulations (including S.I. 505 of 1998) may result in withdrawal of an approval as provided for in Regulations 12 and 13 of S.I. 505 of 1998.

- 3.4 All sections of the application form should be completed **in full** and no questions should be left unanswered. Failure to do so will result in the application being rejected.
- 3.5 The following fee structure applies to groundhandling (applicable from 1st January 2026):

New Applications Annual	€2,756
Monitoring Fee	€2,756
Approval Amendment Fee	€1,224
Late Fee	€2,551

Note that fees applicable to groundhandling are adjusted annually for changes in the Consumer Price Index (CPI).

Payment Methods

Application fees should be paid at the time of making your application by Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) to the IAA's bank account. Bank Account details are as follows:

Bank: Bank of Ireland, 2 College Green, Dublin 2. Account Name:
Irish Aviation Authority
Account Number: 19410683 Sort code: 90-00-17
IBAN: IE91 BOFI 9000 1719 4106 83 BIC: BOFIE2D

Please ensure that your Company Name is quoted as a reference when making payments to the IAA's bank account.

It should be noted that the fee payable on application for a Groundhandling Approval is non-refundable.

- 3.6 You will find further clarification on the fee structure applicable to groundhandling at:
https://www.iaa.ie/docs/default-source/car-documents/gh_clarification_of_groundhandling_fee_structure.pdf?Status=Master&sfvrsn=249f14f3_0
- 3.7 It is important to note that the IAA does not give decisions in principle on proposed plans by potential applicants for a Groundhandling Approval. A decision to grant/refuse an operating licence will only be given

in the context of a fully complete, formal application³.

- 3.8 Applications should be made to the IAA in advance of the commencement of operations (minimum two weeks) as it is important that the IAA has adequate time to process applications.

4. Processing the Application

- 4.1 Applications are dealt with in the order in which they are received. On receipt of an application, the IAA will acknowledge receipt within two working days of same and respond as quickly as possible thereafter.
- 4.2 A preliminary examination of the application takes place first, where the IAA will check if there are any sections of the application incomplete or if there is any information missing. Applicants should be contacted within 7 days of submission if the application is incomplete or any documents are missing.
- 4.3 The application and supporting documentation are then examined in detail. Once this is completed, the IAA may need to contact the applicant with queries on the application or to obtain additional information relevant to the application. Such queries will be dealt with in writing and in a timely manner by the IAA. A meeting may also be required with the applicant but this will depend on the number and nature of the queries arising and each individual case will be different.
- 4.4 If the applicant does not engage with the IAA for a period of three months in relation to any queries or requests for further information, the application will be treated as abandoned and thereafter a fresh application will be required along with the relevant fee.

5. Annual Monitoring of Groundhandling Approval Holders

- 5.1 The IAA is not only responsible for approving suppliers of groundhandling services/self-handlers, but is also obliged to closely monitor compliance with the requirements of the Groundhandling Regulations on a regular basis. In order to monitor compliance effectively, we regularly contact Approval holders to request certain information. There are two main areas monitored by the IAA on a regular basis: (i) financial fitness and (ii) insurance cover. A brief outline is included below on the information we require in each area.

³ A fully complete application means that all questions are answered, and all required documents are supplied, page 2 of the application form is completed, signed and a scanned copy is attached to the form and the application fee is paid in full.

(i) Financial Fitness

For companies engaged in self-handling activities only, they are required to submit audited accounts for the company on an annual basis. However, for companies engaged in the provision of Groundhandling services to third parties (including airlines), they are required to separate out the accounts of their Groundhandling activities from the accounts of their other activities (if any) and produce audited annual accounts in respect of their Groundhandling activities. The legislation requires that all approved groundhandlers submit accounts to the IAA within **6 months** of the company's accounting year end. An explanatory note in relation to the separation of accounts for Groundhandling can be supplied to companies who request guidance on this.

It should be noted that the requirement to submit annual audited accounts under the Groundhandling Regulations is entirely separate to any obligation a company is required to meet for the Companies Registration Office, Revenue Commissioners etc.

Additional information requirements relating to financial fitness may apply to groundhandling approval holders during the first two years of operation.

(ii) Insurance cover

The legislation on Groundhandling requires that groundhandlers maintain adequate insurance at all times to cover liability in respect of employees, passengers, luggage, cargo, mail and third parties.

The IAA applies certain minimum levels of insurance cover in respect of Public Liability, Employers Liability and Motor Cover as set out under the Rules of Conduct for Groundhandling as published by Dublin, Shannon and Cork Airports.

With regard to Motor Cover, please note that **all roads (including Airside) at a State Airport (Dublin, Cork and Shannon Airports) are deemed a public place** in accordance with relevant Irish legislation and must be insured accordingly. The groundhandler is required to possess a current motor insurance policy issued under or in compliance with the Irish Road Traffic Acts. The motor policy must include a specific extension permitting the groundhandler to use vehicles airside at airports.

Applicants must arrange for their insurer to complete the IAA's Insurance Declaration Form as provided with the application or it can also be accessed from our website at,

<https://www.iaa.ie/commercial-aviation/groundhandling/apply-for-an-approval>

Ongoing compliance with the insurance requirements is monitored each year as insurance policies are renewed.

6. Renewal of Groundhandling Approvals

- 6.1 Groundhandling Approvals are issued for a period of five years.
- 6.2 In advance of the expiry of a Groundhandling Approval, the IAA will write to the approval holder requesting to know whether it is their intention to renew their Groundhandling Approval.
- 6.3 If it is their intention to apply for a renewal of their Approval, the company must complete a Renewal Form and provide the relevant documentation

requested therein in order to demonstrate continued compliance with the relevant requirements applicable to Groundhandling Approval holders.

7. Approval Amendments

- 7.1 Holders of a Groundhandling Approval must apply for an amendment prior to:
- (i) Engaging in the provision of new groundhandling activities or
 - (ii) Providing groundhandling services at a new airport location⁴
- 7.2 Amendment applications must be made to the IAA in advance of the commencement of the new activities or operations at a new airport location using the Amendment Application Form which is available to download from the IAA's website at, <https://www.iaa.ie/commercial-aviation/groundhandling/amend-an-approval>

8. Information Requirements Summary

- 8.1 The IAA issues an 'Information Requirements' Summary Sheet to all new Groundhandling Approval holders which sets out the regular requirements in terms of monitoring, i.e. the information required to be provided to the IAA to demonstrate ongoing compliance with the Groundhandling Regulations. The summary sheet also lists certain other events/changes which need to be notified to the IAA or require approval in advance.
- 8.2 A copy of the Information Requirements summary sheet is available on our website at, <https://www.iaa.ie/commercial-aviation/groundhandling/apply-for-an-approval>

9. Queries

Any queries on the application form/process should be directed to the Licensing Department on Tel: +353 1 6031100 or by e-mail to: groundhandling@iaa.ie.

⁴ Holders of self-handling Approvals are already authorised to operate at all three airports where a Groundhandling Approval is required (i.e. Dublin, Cork and Shannon Airports). Self-handlers need only apply for an amendment to an existing Approval when they wish to engage in the provision of new groundhandling activities.

10. Useful Contacts

Companies are advised to contact the relevant airport authority in order to co- ordinate the application procedure, see below for contact details for the Groundhandling units at Dublin, Shannon and Cork airports:

DUBLIN AIRPORT:

Contact Person: John Paul Walsh
Title: Ground Operations Manager
Contact No. : +353 87 1121772
Email: johnpaul.walsh@dublinairport.com

Airport PABX No: +353 (0)1 8141111

Link to Dublin Airport Groundhandling Requirements Form:

[http://www.dublinairport.com/gns/about-us/doing-business-with-us/ground- handler- application.aspx](http://www.dublinairport.com/gns/about-us/doing-business-with-us/ground-handler-application.aspx)

SHANNON AIRPORT:

Contact Person: Pat Foley
Title: Head of Operations and Safety
Contact No: +353 (0) 61 712465
+353 87 2368454
E-mail: pat.foley@snnairportgroup.ie

Airport PABX No: +353 (0) 61 712000

Link to Shannon Airport Groundhandling Requirements Form:

[https://www.shannonairport.ie/corporate/operations/ground-handling/ground- handling- applications/](https://www.shannonairport.ie/corporate/operations/ground-handling/ground-handling-applications/)

CORK AIRPORT:

Contact Person: Nathan Wall
Title: Operations and Safety Manager
Mobile: +353 87 1432948
E-mail: nathan.wall@corkairport.com

Airport PABX No: +353 (0) 21 4313131

Link to Cork Airport Groundhandling Requirements Form:

<https://www.corkairport.com/do-business-with-us/airport-suppliers/ground-handling>

11. Legislation

11.1 European Legislation:

[Council Directive 96/67/EC on access to the Groundhandling Market at Community airports](#)

11.2 National legislation:

[European Communities \(Access to the Groundhandling market at Community airports\) Regulations, 1998 \(S.I. No. 505 of 1998\)](#)