



Striking a balance

Rex Cadet pilot David Teitzel chats once again with **Mitch Brook** to give him an update on his piloting course at the Australian Airline Pilot Academy (AAPA).

We spoke to David last month, when he was busy building up his hours of practical flying experience. He was living his dream: flying planes. Since then, his practical flying practice has continued, but now he has reached a more challenging stage of the course.

In qualifying for their Command Instrument Rating (CIR) credentials, David and the other cadets studying at the AAPA in Wagga Wagga must 'fly blind'.

This stage of the cadetship, which includes more hours of flying and two tests – one theory, one practical – requires the cadets to fly using only the plane's instruments. They are now getting down to the gritty part of their training.

David had to hit the books again to prepare for another theory test, and amass extra hours in a simulator using only the instruments and equipment in preparation for the 'blind' flight test.

"Your reference to landmarks and where you are is visually taken away," David says. "It's designed so you can fly through clouds and prepare yourself in that way."

Even the practical test for this stage of the course entails flying without visual aids – and it's performed in

a real aeroplane. Each of the cadets must fly in poor-visibility weather or, "if the adverse weather conditions aren't there, you have to do it 'under the hood' – it's like blinkers for horses, really," David explains.

"It shields your view from looking out of the aircraft: all you can look at is your cockpit instruments. This is the most common technique for instrument flying when it isn't 'IMC' – instrument meteorological conditions (good flying weather). It's very challenging."

But the most difficult part about the course, he says, is trying to strike a balance between study, practical flying and relaxation – finding time for himself.

"There have to be times when you go and see your friends and family as well as study for flying exams and flying; otherwise you won't be able to sustain a healthy level of development and could burn out."

It is a very demanding course and, as David noted in our first interview, AAPA has one of the fastest commencement-to-graduation periods of any flying course in Australia designed for specially screened students with an above average aptitude for flying.

As the cadets near the end of their program, they're certainly feeling the heat. ●



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