APPLICATIONS FOR NEW, FULLY-PAID SCHEME GOES LIVE - BRITISH AIRWAYS TO FUND TRAINING COSTS OF 60 PROSPECTIVE PILOTS

News / Airlines, Maintenance / Trainings

PROSPECTIVE pilots can from today apply for a place on a new British Airways scheme that will see the £100,000 cost of their training covered entirely by the airline. The national flag carrier's Speedbird Pilot Academy programme will lift the previously prohibitive cost barrier of training to become an airline pilot for up to 60 successful candidates a year – helping to level the playing field and make a flying career a realistic option for all. It is hoped that by removing the high costs associated with pilot training from the applicant, people from across all communities will be encouraged to apply. Successful recruits will also have accommodation and food costs covered during their 16-month training period, making it the only airline scheme that removes all associated costs from the individual.

Sean Doyle, British Airways' Chairman and CEO, commented:"The Speedbird Pilot Academy will make the ambition of becoming a British Airways pilot a reality for people who'd previously written the option off because of the cost barrier. Our aim is to attract the very best talent out there for our future generation of pilots. Whether someone is just leaving school or embarking on a second

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career they never thought possible, we're levelling the playing field by removing the initial training cost barrier to make a flying career more accessible to a wider range of people and giving everyone an equal chance. We fly to more than 200 destinations around the world on a range of aircraft types, providing pilots with an abundance of opportunities and making a career as a British Airways pilot extremely rewarding. This first-in-a-generation initiative will allow anyone to make it a reality."

Applications for the scheme can now be submitted via the airline's careers website, and applicants are being encouraged to apply quickly, as due to the expected unprecedented demand, will close within seven days. Training will begin early next year and upon completion of the course, recruits will land a full-time, salaried pilot position with the airline.

British Airways is working closely with Fantasy Wings, UK leading organisation for diversity in aviation and a member of the BA Better World Community Fund, to promote the scheme to young people from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds, other communities around the country and young women in the aviation industry. British Airways' Senior First Officer and former cadet, Hannah Vaughan, 32, described the scheme as 'groundbreaking', and said it was important for the airline to attract the top applicants and remove barriers that may have put people off previously. She said: "This programme is a real leveller and opens a pilot career to everyone, not just those who can afford the initial training costs.I'm really proud to be flying for an airline offering this opportunity and would urge anyone who is interested in a highly rewarding career flying to destinations around the world to apply.I know there will be a lot of people who have never thought of being a pilot as a realistic option for them, but this cadet scheme changes that - and might just change your life."

To encourage more applicants to apply, Hannah's determined to bust some of the current myths to help set straight some common misconceptions about becoming a professional airline pilot.

MYTH: You need to be rich to train as a pilot.

TRUTH: This is false. The British Airways Speedbird Pilot Academy is entirely funded by the airline.

MYTH: You can only become a pilot if you have a university degree.

TRUTH: This is false. The new cadet scheme offers a great career without the need for a degree.

MYTH: You need to have A-Level qualifications to apply for a role as a pilot.

TRUTH: False, A-Levels are not required. You just need six GCSEs to apply to the cadet scheme. (Six GCSEs grade A-C or 5-9 including Maths, English and a Science or equivalent qualifications).

MYTH: You need to be a maths or science genius.

TRUTH: A lot of people think this, but it isn't true. As long as you meet the GCSE requirements you can apply.

MYTH: You need perfect eyesight – if you're short-sighted you can't apply.

TRUTH: No, you can fly for commercial airlines with glasses or contact lenses.

MYTH: You have to be under 40 to apply.

TRUTH: Anyone who will be between the ages of 18 and 55 when they start their training can

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apply. Everyone has an equal chance of being successful.

MYTH: If you've got no flying experience you've got no chance of being considered. You need a private pilot licence first to train as a commercial pilot.

TRUTH: Having flying experience or a private pilot licence isn't a requirement to apply for the cadet scheme. That said, if you can, you may wish to try a short trial flight which can be in a glider or light aircraft to make sure that you enjoy the feeling of flying. There are many scholarships available which may help with this.

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