Aircraft Maintenance Technician

Aircraft maintenance technicians usually specialise as either **mechanical engineers** who service and overhaul the engines, airframes and hydraulic and pneumatic systems, or **avionic engineers** who service and overhaul the electronic systems, instruments, flight control, navigation and communication systems of aircraft.

Mechanical and avionic engineers have similar duties and usually specialise in a particular type of aircraft.

The Work

You could be:

- carrying out routine maintenance of the aircraft on the ground during the turnaround between flights
- carrying out full servicing of the aircraft within the hangar at regular intervals
- taking reports from the air crew and reading the technical log to identify difficulties experienced during flight
- checking all parts which affect the safety of the aircraft, such as tyres, brakes, hydraulics and pneumatic systems, instruments, flight control systems and navigation and communication systems
- using electronic testing equipment to find faults
- repairing or replacing parts, using a range of hand and power tools
- arranging refuelling
- completing worksheets and having these certified by a qualified supervisor.

Pay

The figures below are only a guide. Actual pay rates may vary, depending on:

- where you work
- the size of the company or organisation you work for
- the demand for the job.

A trainee aircraft maintenance technician earns around £13,000 a year.

The starting salary for qualified aircraft maintenance mechanics or engineers is normally around £24,000 a year. With experience this can rise to around £40,000 a year or more.

Conditions

- When doing regular servicing and overhaul of aircraft, you would normally work inside workshops or hangars. During routine maintenance you would work mainly outdoors, in and around the aircraft.
- Some work must be done outside in all weathers, and often in difficult conditions at heights or in cramped spaces.
- Sometimes, the work surroundings can be noisy and dirty.
- You may have to work shifts or irregular hours.
- You would have to wear overalls, safety glasses, ear protectors and harnesses.

Getting In

- Most entrants follow an approved apprenticeship scheme which is offered by airlines and aircraft maintenance organisations, which can take 3-4 years. Employers' requirements vary but most look for a minimum of 4-5 subjects at National 5 including English, Maths and a science (preferably Physics) or technological subject. You usually have to pass practical and written entrance tests.
- Other entrants start by taking a full time college course leading to NC (SCQF Level 6), HNC (SCQF Level 7), HND (SCQF Level 8) or degree (SCQF Level 9-10). Entry requirements for NCs are usually 3-4 subjects at National 4 or 5 including English, Maths and a relevant science or technological subject. For an HNC or HND you normally need either the NC, or 1-2 Highers as well as subjects at National 5. For a degree you normally need 4-5 Highers.
- Both Ayrshire College and UHI Perth (University of the Highlands and Islands) offer relevant courses.
- If you are interested in working in the Armed Services you may be able to get an apprenticeship with the Royal Air Force.
- You could also apply if you have a background in mechanical, electrical or electronic work.
- You can get information on courses, apprenticeships and entry routes on the Careers in Aerospace website.
- You need good general fitness to enter this work. You may have to pass a medical examination.
- Certain colour vision conditions may affect entry to careers in this branch of engineering.

Most aircraft mechanics or engineers work for commercial airlines or aircraft maintenance organisations. There are also opportunities in the Armed Forces, flying clubs, air taxi companies, aircraft manufacturers, aircraft component workshops and with organisations providing agricultural, ambulance and police aviation services.

What Does It Take

You need to have:

- scientific and technical aptitude
- an accurate, methodical and systematic approach
- a strong sense of responsibility
- good observation and problem solving skills
- good practical skills
- good concentration
- the ability to understand engineering drawings
- a head for heights and ability to work in cramped or difficult spaces
- a responsible approach to health and safety regulations.

You need to be able to:

- work carefully, accurately and at speed
- work reliably, alone and as part of a team
- pay attention to detail
- meet deadlines.

Training

- If you enter an apprenticeship, you would follow training approved by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA).
- If you do a course at college first, you would then take up a post with an employer and continue with further approved training.
- Anyone working in this industry must be licensed. There are several categories of licence to cover different levels and disciplines, all regulated by the European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA). This includes the Part 66 Licence which is required to be able to certify aircraft as airworthy.
- There are different categories within the Part 66 Licence, permitting the holder to carry out and authorise varying levels of maintenance. Contact the CAA for more details.
- You will have to do regular training to keep up to date with new equipment.
- You may add extra type ratings to your licence, which means that you can work on different types of planes, for example a Boeing 747 or Airbus A320.
- You need to maintain your knowledge and experience of the type of aircraft you work on. This is necessary for licensing purposes.
- You might be able to do further study to gain a degree in aeronautical engineering. This would open up more job options.

Getting On

- To be promoted, you normally have to have the CAA Licence and the EASA Part 66 licence. You must have these to be able to certify that aircraft are airworthy.
- You may go on to complete a degree in Aircraft Engineering at UHI Perth or the University of the West of Scotland.
- Promotion is usually to supervisor or manager.
- You may be able to progress to working in aircraft design.
- You might be able to work abroad.

More Information

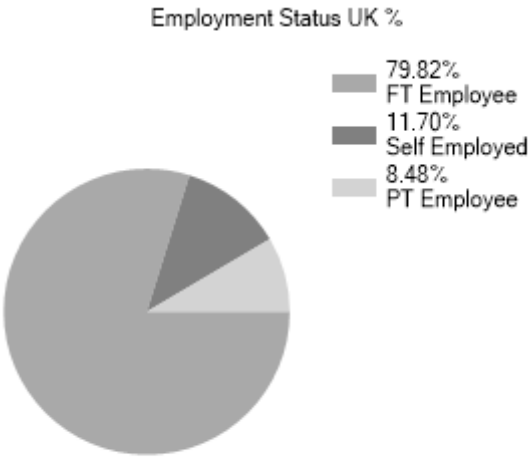
The Tomorrow's Engineers website has more information on careers in engineering.

Contacts

Civil Aviation Authority
Website: www.caa.co.uk
X: @UK_CAA

Royal Aeronautical Society (RAeS)
Tel: 020 7670 4326
Email: careers@aerosociety.com
Website: www.aerosociety.com
Website (2): www.careersinaerospace.com
X: @AeroSociety
Facebook: www.facebook.com/RoyalAeronauticalSociety

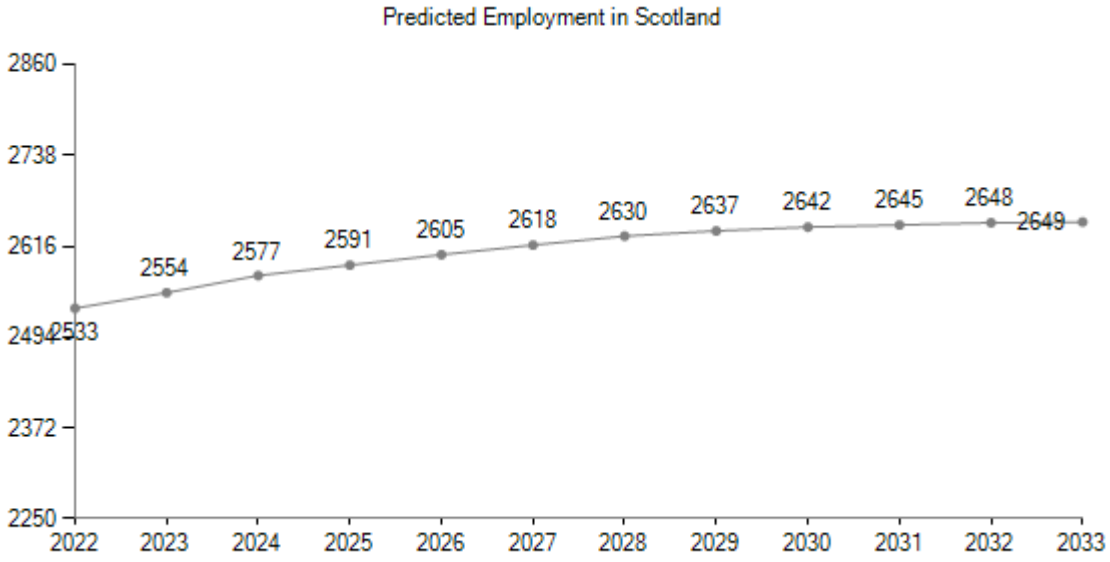
Statistics



Past Unemployment - Scotland

No Claimant statistics available for Scotland.

LMI data powered by LMI for All



LMI data powered by Lightcast