



New Controller Guide

For incoming OBS/Visiting/Transfer Members

2024-08-18

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Welcome Aboard!

On behalf of the entire Seattle ARTCC staff team, we would like to welcome you to one of VATUSA's finest ARTCCs. Whether you are a new controller just beginning your VATSIM career, a transferring member, or a returning member, we are glad to have you on board. As a Seattle Controller, you will be among some of VATSIM's finest members. We range from young to old, new to pros, and occasional hobbyists to full time enthusiasts. No matter where you fall into place, you are now part of a growing team of people looking to brighten the world of online aviation for others, and set in place a precedent that will improve our hobby for years to come. No matter who you are, where you come from, or what you plan to make out of this hobby, we welcome you as part of the ZSE family.

But with that, comes a responsibility we all must carry. Seattle is not one of the best by chance, it is because we operate as a team, we build each other up, and we work together for the benefit of fellow controllers, and the pilots that we serve. Each member of Seattle plays a role in helping that team function. Some of us are just members who serve the pilots, encourage others to do the same, and bounce ideas and experience off each other to better improve our overall service to VATSIM members. Some of us are staff members, who play a role in making sure Seattle runs smoothly on a day to day basis. But, regardless of your role or experience, you are of the same importance as any other member. We all play our part in making Seattle the best, and we expect you to do the same.

But do not let that stop you! It is fun, after all, so why not enjoy the world of online controlling simulation? If you are a new OBS controller, you will quickly learn what keeps us coming back for more, and before too long, you will be itching to push some tin yourself.

If you think you have what it takes to be a part of the Seattle team, then we are excited to get started with you! Before too long you will be sharing in the enjoyment of a hobby with other like-minded people, and you will be amazed at the friendships and bonds that you will form.

Ready to get started? Then keep reading! This guide serves as sort of a quick-start tutorial. It will not train you to be a controller, but it will teach you everything you need to know to get started with us. We recommend you keep a copy of this guide saved in an accessible location, as you will likely be referring to it often in your first few months. Let us get started.

- The Seattle ARTCC Staff Team

Basic Controller Expectations

1.1 - Basic Expectations/Document Center

As a Seattle Controller, you will be held to a high standard of professionalism, friendliness, and overall good behavior. A team is only as good as the sum of its parts...that is, a team is only as good as the members that make it. Therefore, we strive to make all members good members. Overall, every member is expected to operate as part of a team rather than an individual, working together for the benefit of the team and the pilots that it serves. On most days, that will be easy, but on some days it will be hard, and that's where the test of a true Seattle controller comes in. Anyone can do the right thing when it's easy, but not everyone has the courage to do the right thing when it's hard. Here at Seattle though, we think it's a no brainer.

Here is the basic rule: **If the action/words/response does not benefit the team, do not do it!** It is as simple as that. If you must think about if something is right, odds are it probably is not. But it never hurts to ask either, as that is what we're here for. But, in general, if it does not feel right or does not feel beneficial to the team, then it probably is not.

Nonetheless, as with any organization, there are certain rules that must be put in place. We outline all our policies and procedures in our document center, which we encourage you to take a moment and read through before going any further in this guide. You can find the document center [here](#).

Let us break down the contents of the document center:

General: The General section of the document center contains anything that does not fall under the other categories.

Central Policy Statements: The CPS section contains all our policies that govern the ARTCC in terms of both controller conduct and general ATC operations. Even if a policy does not apply to you, we still expect you to be familiar with it. The Seattle ARTCC operates under the same Code of Conduct as the VATSIM network, so if it would not be acceptable for you to do on VATSIM, then it's not acceptable at Seattle. Period.

Standard Operating Procedures: SOPs are the procedures that apply to day to day ATC activities on the network. You are required to understand and comply with these procedures as they relate to all positions you work on the network, and before beginning training. If you have not read the SOPs before your first training session, the session will likely be discontinued. You may have read some of these for the Seattle SOP exam on VATUSA, but go back and read all of the SOPs for the airports you will be working – for new OBS students this is Portland (PDX).

Letters of Agreement: A Letter of Agreement (LOA) is a document published by two neighboring ARTCCs outlining specific procedures that will be followed when transferring aircraft from one ARTCC to another. As a new controller, a lot of the information in those documents may not make much sense, and you'll learn about LOAs in depth during your C1 training. Until then, it would be wise to check back in with them regularly and apply what you have learned to understand what they are saying.

Training Documents: These are what you really need to be familiar with, especially as you go through our training syllabus. The training documents contain a lot, but not all, of the material that you need to learn during training that specifically pertains to Seattle. They don't really focus on basic controlling skills so much as they focus on Seattle specific procedures, so if something doesn't make sense at first, don't worry about it, just ask your Instructor or Mentor during a session and they'll make sure you understand it.

1.2 - Controller Activity

As a Seattle ARTCC member, you fall under an activity requirement just like at any other ARTCC. The basic rule, as outlined in [vZSE Facility Operation and Administration 7210.3](#), is that all Seattle controllers are expected to maintain a minimum of 3 hours accumulated online time per calendar quarter. These can be on any position you are authorized to work, though you won't be removed from the roster if you joined partway through the quarter.

OBS rated controllers are not authorized to work any positions, and instead must put in at least 8 hours of training availability per quarter.

2. Communication

The Seattle ARTCC utilizes many forms of communication for ARTCC related business:

- Email (Primary)
- Discord (Announcements, ATC coordination, meetings, training)
- Document Center (SOPs, policies - see section 1.1)
- Website based news/NOTAM's/forums

2.1 - Who to Contact

Depending on the situation or request, users should communicate directly to specific staff personnel for various reasons. Of course, not all situations can be outlined in this guide as sometimes special ones do arise, however, the following should be a guide as to who to contact when certain situations arise, that will help your judgment.

General ARTCC comments/complaints: Email management@zseartcc.org

Membership related questions/concerns/inquiries: Email management@zseartcc.org

Disciplinary matters: Email the current ATM and CC the current DATM.

Training related complaints/concerns/suggestions: Open a training ticket. You can open a training ticket by navigating to the #help channel in discord, and clicking “Training Help.” Alternatively, you can email the TA directly

General training related inquiries: Email training@zseartcc.org

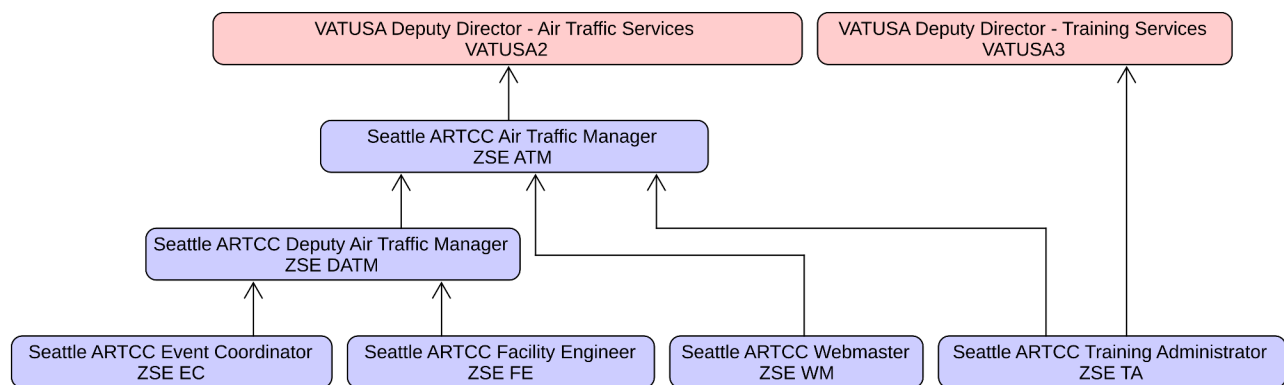
Website related questions/issues: Open a website ticket. You can open a website ticket by navigating to the #help channel in discord, and clicking “Training Help.” Alternatively, you can email the webmaster directly.

All event related inquiries: Email events@zseartcc.org

Although Seattle ARTCC believes in and enforces an open door policy for all staff members, there is a set communication structure in place to ensure that the proper individuals receive communications about certain issues in a timely manner so the matter can be addressed. If at any time you feel uncomfortable going to a specific staff member for any reason, you may feel free to utilize the open-door policy. However, whenever possible, please follow the guide outlined above to ensure a timely and efficient flow of communication so matters can be handled as quickly as possible.

2.2 – Chain of Command/Chain of Communication

The following is the chain of command, which also serves as the chain of communication:



2.3 - Email Communications

The primary form of communication, and only form of communication for official matters, for the Seattle ARTCC is via email. For this reason, controllers are always expected to maintain a current email address, and check that email on a regular basis.

Email communications may come as mass emails sent to the entire ARTCC, or a certain group, from management, or from users to staff via one of two methods:

1. Directly to a staff member's personal email address as listed on the staff page of the website (i.e. joe@zseartcc.org)
2. To one of the following shared mailboxes that will automatically forward to the specified staff members

management@zseartcc.org - Forwards to ATM, DATM and TA

feedback@zseartcc.org – Forwards to ATM, DATM and TA. Controller feedback can also be submitted on the website [here](#)

training@zseartcc.org - Forwards to all training staff members

events@zseartcc.org: Forwards to ATM, DATM, EC and DEC if applicable

2.4 - Website based News/NOTAMs/Forums

The Seattle ARTCC utilizes 3 communication systems within its website. These are not primary means of communication but can be used to convey information to members.

News:

The recent news section is located on the homepage, just below the scrolling banners. News items can include new members, promotions of members, announcements and general info that may or may not be of enough importance to warrant an email.

Recent News

08/10/2024	Congratulations to Adrian Nguyen for completing the requirements for Ground !
08/06/2024	Congratulations to Pranav Chandramouli for completing the requirements for Local !
08/04/2024	Congratulations to Matthew Armstrong for being appointed to Mentor !
08/03/2024	Welcome Eshaan Rana , our newest member to ZSE!
08/02/2024	Congratulations to Drew Jones for completing the requirements for Approach !
More...	

NOTAMs:

A NOTAM, or **Notice To Air Missions**, is an important piece of information of slightly higher priority that our members need to know about. You should check on this section regularly. A NOTAM could include operational changes, updates to policy, changes in everyday ZSE operations or anything else that we really want you to know about.

NOTAMs

02/17/2024	Seattle ARTCC is seeking applications for the position of Training Administrator!
08/16/2023	A new Radar Cheatsheet has been published in the documents center.
08/26/2021	Effective 01SEP2021, a new LOA will be in effect with ZVR. See the document center for details.
05/03/2021	MIA and MVA data updated for vERAM and VRC. Click here to view changelog.
01/21/2021	A massive MVA data update has been pushed for all sector files! Click here to read the changelog.
More...	

2.5 - Discord

The Seattle ARTCC utilizes Discord for the purposes of general announcements, controller coordination while online, training purposes, and ARTCC meetings or other official business. Currently, some public channels exist to allow some socializing between our members, however, this can be changed at management's discretion should it be abused, and for that reason controllers should be careful to follow any and all rules and guidelines for its use.

Now that all the serious and formal warnings are out of the way, we will go ahead and point out that other than our pilots, the Discord server is probably the best and most fun part of Seattle. Our members use it as a place to escape the real world for a bit, relax and get to know other members. Friendships are formed in Discord. All the cool people hang out in Discord. Discord is where the fun happens. But it's also where we conduct official business, so treat it appropriately and professionally.

The Discord server operates under the same policies for personal conduct as the ARTCC, which means it operates under the VATSIM Code of Conduct like anything else. Therefore, **if it is not allowed on the VATSIM network, then it is not allowed on the Discord server.**

Here is a simple rule of thumb for the wise: **If it would not be okay in your mom's house, it is probably not okay in the Discord server.** Follow that rule and you will be golden.

2.6 - Server Groups and Channels

When you connect to the ZSE Discord server, you will notice a variety of channels you can join. Once you are assigned permissions, you will be able to move between channels by double clicking them.

Permissions can be assigned to individual members to dictate what administrative permissions they have on the server. Here is a basic rundown of the ones we have:

Management: Blue, This staff designation is for the ATM, DATM, and TA of ZSE ARTCC.

ZSE Team Members: Light green, this covers all other non-training staff positions. The webmaster, Facility Engineers, and Event Staff have this role.

Training Staff: Yellow, training staff are any one of our Instructors or Mentors. These members are authorized to provide users with training and can be contacted to answer training related inquiries.

Home Controllers: Controllers who are home members of ZSE (not visiting from another ARTCC) are given a server group matching their VATSIM Controller Rating. These permissions are color-based, and a designator for their rating:

- Light Blue/Gray: Observer, the lowest controller rating and assigned to our new members.
- Orange: Given to student controllers, and contains a designator showing if the member is an S1, S2, or S3 student
- Green: Given to fully certified controllers, and contains a designator showing if the member is a C1 or C3.

VATSIM Supervisors: Dark Purple, given only to VATSIM Network Supervisors. These members have the role of addressing issues that arise between members on the VATSIM network.

VATUSA Staff: Red, given to VATUSA Staff.

Visiting Controllers: Visiting controllers are distinguished Discord with a brown color and are NOT designated by their specific rating.

ZSE Neighbors: Colored light purple, members of other ARTCCs that are welcome in our Discord for coordination or to just generally hang out and keep in touch. As with visiting controllers they are not designated by their specific rating.

As stated above, different ranks contain different permissions. We will not go into the administrative permissions as that is discussed with staff members when they receive said permissions, but we will point out that your rank designates which channels you may freely move into. Here is a basic overview of our channels and who may enter them, from top to bottom:

Public Voice Channels: Anyone may enter

- **General:** Public room where members are free to chat and socialize.
- **Flying:** Used as a general room when flying on or off-network.
- **Away:** You will be automatically connected to the AFK channel after a set period of inactivity and should utilize this channel when temporarily away.

Controlling Floor and Coordination: Anyone may enter; however, controlling rooms should be reserved for active online controllers only.

Help: This channel can be used to open general support tickets, website support tickets, or training tickets. If you need to have an exam assigned or get permission to request training, please post your request here. No need to tag any staff or groups, they will work on your request as soon as possible.

Training: Channels for training purposes only. Anyone may enter, subject to specific rules, only for the purposes of an active training session.

- **Training-department:** This is used for general text-chat related to Training. Please do not use this room to request training, training requests must go through the website.
- **Helpful Links:** Post links that may be helpful for other members. Exercises: The training department will regularly post scenarios or questions to highlight certain ATC topics. All controllers are welcome to join in constructive discussion. Remember to cite an authoritative source for your answers!
- **Waiting Room:** You may wait in this room prior to a scheduled training session until a training staff member moves you to a classroom. It is recommended to be available at least 5 minutes prior to your scheduled session.
- **Classrooms:** Classrooms are used during training sessions between an INS/MTR and student. You will be moved here from the Classroom Waiting Room when it is time for your training session.

Staff: Staff offices are accessible only to their respective staff members. This allows staff members a quiet place to work on ARTCC related business while still being accessible to members in the Discord server. The Seattle ARTCC maintains an open-door policy when it comes to our staff, meaning all staff members are always available to any member, for any reason. If you wish to speak with a staff member currently in their office, simply private message them.

3. Training

The Seattle ARTCC, like any other ARTCC, operates its own in-house training program for new and incoming student controllers, which complies with all VATSIM and VATUSA training guidelines. The following is what you as a new member need to know about our training policies, and how to get started on your training.

3.1 - Ratings System and the VATSIM GCAP

The Seattle ARTCC operates under the VATSIM Global Controller Administration Policy (GCAP). The VATSIM GCAP is a policy outlining the restrictions placed on certain controller ratings pertaining to which positions may be controlled by users, depending on their rating. The VATSIM GCAP can be viewed in its entirety [here](#).

Under the VATSIM GCAP, the following is an outline of which position types may be controlled by certain ratings, with the exception to temporary solo endorsements, as outlined in 4.5 below.

- **Developing Controller (S1):** May control unrestricted or tier 2 (with endorsement) clearance delivery (DEL), ground (GND) and ramp (RMP) positions.
- **Aerodrome Controller (S2):** May control unrestricted or tier 2 (with endorsement) tower (TWR) positions
- **Terminal Controller (S3):** May control unrestricted or tier 2 (with endorsement) approach (APP) and departure (DEP) positions.
- **Enroute Controller (C1):** May control Center (CTR) positions.
- **Senior Controller (C3):** This is granted as an award of service and does not provide any special roles beyond that of a C1-controller. More information on the C3 rating program can be found [here](#).

The Instructor 1 (I1) rating is reserved for Seattle ARTCC Instructors and the Instructor 3 (I3) rating is reserved for the Seattle ARTCC Training Administrator. These ratings both carry the same permissions as the C1 rating for position staffing purposes.

3.2 - Training for Home Controllers

Training for home controllers (that is, controllers whose home ARTCC is ZSE) has the highest priority for training (above visiting controllers). Home controllers who begin at the OBS level will complete initial OBS training, and then proceed through the S1-C1 ratings. Transferring controllers coming into ZSE with ratings higher than OBS must complete a QA checkout prior to being able to control and then complete training required to secure any Tier 2 endorsements (see section 3.7 below), and then proceed with training as a regular student.

Student controller training consists of a combination of the following:

- One on one classroom type lecture sessions
- Simulated (Sweatbox) training
- Live network training
- Written Examinations
- Over-The-Shoulder (OTS) examinations

Written Examinations: Mandatory written examinations conducted by the VATSIM network via the VATUSA Academy. Students will be assigned rating examinations by the training department when the student opens a training ticket, with the exception of the S1 exam. Controllers wishing to train for the next rating must first complete at least 40 hours on their current highest position. Exams are timed (60 minutes/exam), open book, and must be passed with an 80% or higher to proceed.

Classroom Training: Classroom training is conducted one on one or with a group of students, and at least one INS/MTR. Classroom sessions are conducted in specified channels on the Discord server and cover book knowledge for the positions that the student will be able to control under their new rating. Classroom training usually makes up the first portion of a training session.

Simulated (Sweatbox) Training: Training conducted on the VATSIM Sweatbox server using simulated traffic, controlled by the INS/MTR. In Sweatbox sessions, Discord is used for voice communications, and the INS/MTR (or their designee) will act as the voice of the pilots. This allows a student time to apply procedures and phraseology they have learned before controlling live traffic on the network.

Live Network Training: Training conducted on the live VATSIM network. During live sessions, students will log onto a position using the “Student” role in CRC, and will be monitored by an INS/MTR operating with the “Instructor” role. During or after the session, the INS/MTR will provide guidance and feedback to the controller to sharpen their skills prior to taking an examination.

OTS Examinations: Over-The-Shoulder examinations are conducted on the live network and may be requested after a student has received 2 OTS recommendations and has passed the written examination associated with their rating. OTS examinations are conducted like live sessions, except the INS will save all feedback and interaction with the student until after the exam is completed and will evaluate the student's performance on the network. Upon successful completion of an OTS examination, a student will be issued their new rating and any new position type endorsements.

During live or sweatbox sessions, an INS/MTR may issue an OTS Recommendation to the student's training records. Two OTS recommendations from at least two separate INS/MTS (minimum 1 INS) is required before a student may proceed with an OTS examinations.

3.2.1 - Training for Returning Controllers

Returning controllers who return to ZSE within 6 months will not lose any position type endorsements and may resume controlling/training as if they had never left. Returning controllers after 6 months must retake the Seattle SOP Examination on VATUSA and will have to complete the same training as a transferring controller (section 3.2)

3.2.2 - Initial OBS Training

Initial OBS students will take and pass the Seattle SOP Examination on VATUSA and will then have their training authorized on the website and will be allowed to submit training requests. OBS students will then be treated like normal students until they receive their S1 rating.

Due to their inability to control any positions under an OBS rating, OBS rated controllers are only required to submit 8 hours of training availability per quarter, to meet activity requirements. For further details, refer to [vZSE Facility Operation and Administration 7210.3](#).

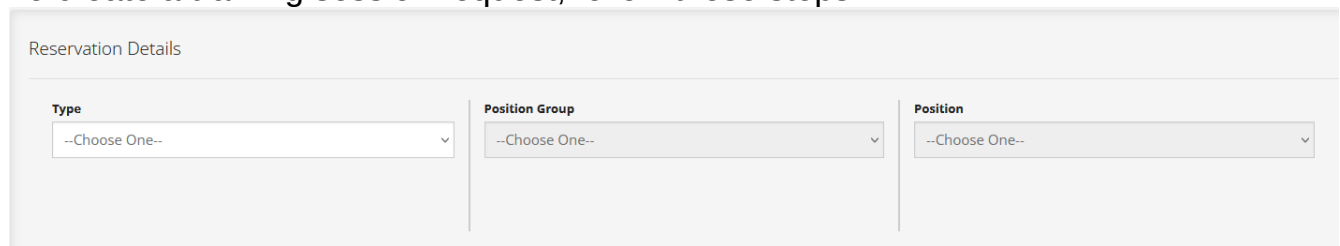
3.3 - Training for Visiting Controllers

Visiting controllers are treated the same as regular transfer controllers, with the exception that training for new ratings must be conducted at their home ARTCC. ZSE will only offer training to visiting controllers for the purposes of QA checkouts and Tier 2 endorsements.

3.4 - Using the Scheduler

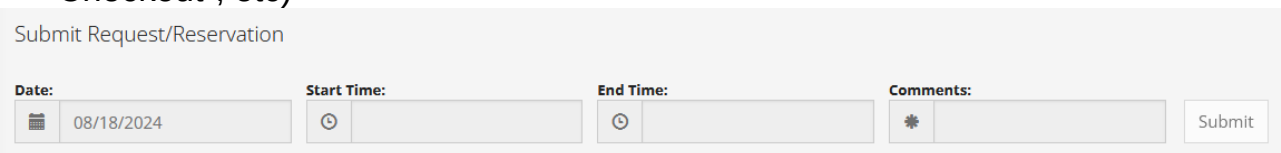
The Seattle ARTCC Scheduler, found [here](#), is the system used to create and track training sessions within the ARTCC. The scheduler also acts as a way for INS/MTRs to show their availability for training (optional), or for controllers to reserve a position to control during a certain period of time. It can also be found by clicking Controller>My Schedule on the main menu of the website after logging in.

To create a training session request, follow these steps:



The screenshot shows the 'Reservation Details' section of the scheduler. It contains three dropdown menus: 'Type', 'Position Group', and 'Position'. Each dropdown menu currently displays '--Choose One--' and has a downward arrow icon on the right side. The form is divided into three columns by vertical lines.

1. Under Reservation Details, set the reservation type to “Request Training”
2. Set the Position Group to the type of control position you want to train for (new OBS users should select Clearance Delivery for their first session)
3. Select the position you want to train on (unless otherwise stated, training is done at PDX. New OBS users should select PDX_DEL for their first session.)
4. Add any comments about your session (i.e. “First Session”, “OTS Rec”, “Tier 2 Checkout”, etc)



The screenshot shows the 'Submit Request/Reservation' section of the scheduler. It contains four input fields: 'Date:', 'Start Time:', 'End Time:', and 'Comments:'. The 'Date:' field has a calendar icon and shows '08/18/2024'. The 'Start Time:' and 'End Time:' fields have clock icons. The 'Comments:' field has a star icon. A 'Submit' button is located to the right of the 'Comments:' field.

5. Set the date for your requested session
6. Set the start time for your requested session (website uses your local timezone as configured in your profile settings)
7. Set the end time for your session
8. Add any comments (i.e. “Times Flexible, date can change, etc)
9. Click “Submit”

Once you have submitted a training session request, you can view it on the [training requests page](#) under Controller > Request Training. Training sessions will appear as yellow blocks until accepted. When accepted by an INS/MTR, a session request will turn green and an email will be sent to the requesting user.

You may view the details of any request by hovering over it on the schedule.

If you wish to delete any of your requests, return to the My Schedule page. Above the calendar, under Schedule Settings, change the Mode from Add to Delete. You may now click on any of your requests on the calendar to remove it.

3.5 - Examinations

ZSE uses two official VATSIM examination methods:

1. Written Examinations - Conducted via the VATUSA Exam Center. The following examinations are currently required for training purposes:
 - a. SOP Examination - Completed by all members upon joining, and returning members after 6 or more months of inactivity, before training may be authorized.
 - b. Rating Examinations: Completed for the S1, S2, S3 and C1 ratings before beginning training for that rating.
2. Over-The-Shoulder Examinations - Live Network practical examinations conducted for a student by a Seattle ARTCC Instructor (I1 or I3 ratings). OTS examinations are required for the S1, S2, S3 and C1 ratings. Unless otherwise stated, all examinations have a passing score of 80% or higher.

3.6 - Solo Endorsements

In the course of their training, a student may be issued a solo endorsement if they demonstrate enough competency to an INS/MTR to be able to control solo on a position for which they are not yet rated, without supervision ([vZSE ATC Training 3120.4](#)). Currently, solo endorsements may be granted for Unrestricted TWR, Unrestricted APP, and CTR (Unrestricted TWR certifications apply for Portland International (KPDX), Unrestricted APP for Eugene and Medford (KEUG), except by the discretion of the Training Administrator). Solo endorsements allow a controller to control a position unsupervised for the duration of the endorsement period, indicated on the controller's profile and the ZSE roster. Solo endorsements may be issued by an INS/MTR for up to 30 calendar days, and may be renewed up to 2 times for a total of 90 days of solo. After that, another solo may not be granted until the controller has completed an OTS examination, until 1 calendar year after the solo, or with an exception granted by the Vice President of VATSIM Americas.

Should a controller have an encounter with a VATSIM Supervisor, ZSE or VATUSA staff member for being on a position, the controller should point that individual to the ZSE roster. If a supervisor asks you to disconnect, disconnect immediately. Controllers

are strongly encouraged to direct the complainant to ARTCC management via the management@zseartcc.org email address.

3.7 Tier 2 Endorsements

Under VATSIM GCAP, VATSIM Divisions may designate certain airports or positions as “tier 2”, and require a controller to undergo additional training/evaluation prior to controlling those positions. Currently, ZSE operates one tier 2 airport: Seattle Tacoma International (KSEA), and two tier 2 TRACONS: S46 (Seattle TRACON) and P80 (Portland TRACON). The following positions require a tier 2 endorsement:

- SEA_RMP
- SEA_DEL
- SEA_GND
- SEA_TWR
- PDX_APP, or any sector therein
- SEA_APP/SEA_DEP, or any sector therein
- SEA_CTR (requires tier 2 endorsements as CTR covers all tier 2 positions when not staffed by another controller)

Members may pursue tier 2 endorsements on positions after completing at least 20 hours on the corresponding unrestricted rating. Tier 2 endorsements require a sweatbox training session by an INS/MTR, and additional training on local KSEA/S46/P80 procedures.