

JOB PROFILE: FLIGHT DISPATCHER

WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?

Airport Flight Dispatchers ensure that aircraft are made ready for departure as quickly and safely as possible.

They make sure that all the different operations and services linked to the preparation of an aircraft for flight come together at the right time and in the right order so that the plane can take off at its allotted time.

Flight dispatchers will oversee activities including cleaning, refuelling and baggage and cargo loading. They liaise closely with air cabin crew and aircraft engineers to ensure that they are also ready to depart.

They also maintain contact with the plane's captain, to tell them the weight of the plane so that they can factor that into their preparations. Dispatches can also have responsibility for opening flights for boarding, and for deciding when to close the gate and not let any latecomers on!

Flight dispatchers make use of a lot of technology – from operational planning tools to radios to maintain contact with all the different service providers.

The job is physical – it can require a lot of time spent on your feet, moving around the airport. It is also a role requiring a detailed understanding of health and safety. Flight dispatchers spend a lot of their time 'airside', which means that they have to be aware of the safety issues involved in working so close to aircraft and airport traffic.

The job also requires the employee to be flexible. Although the hours can be quite

standard - e.g. around 38 hours a week – the hours are worked in shifts, meaning you can be expected to work early mornings, late nights, weekends and bank holidays.

TRAINING

Airport service providers will give their dispatch staff specific flight dispatch training, including learning how to operate the company's computer systems as well as in-depth health and safety training.

There are specific qualifications that can also be studied for, such as awards and certificates in Aircraft Dispatch Services and in Aircraft Boarding and Arrival Services.

PERSONAL QUALITIES & SKILLS

- Well organised and able to plan ahead
- Skills in IT and communication
- Understanding of the importance of customer service and health and safety
- Ability to work under pressure
- Willing to make decisions and use own initiative
- Ability to manage more than one activity at once

ENTRY

Entry requirements can vary. Employers will expect applicants to have a sound basic education, including English and Maths.

Employers will also look for experience of customer service. The ability to speak a foreign language is also useful in this role.

Many flight dispatchers start their careers in other airport roles, such as a passenger handling agent or baggage handler.

PROGRESSION & SALARY

Flight dispatchers can earn anything from £12500. This can rise with experience. There are also more senior, supervisory roles, which will attract a higher salary.