Students cannot afford to fail flight exams. Have you considered the “per-minute” cost of flight training? To rent a Skyhawk and instructor for a one-hour period, the cost is a staggering $177 (fuel surcharge included). Divide by 60 and you get $2.95 a minute. This may not seem like a great amount, but $2.95 adds up very quickly. How long does it take your student to start the engine and get underway? If it takes you 10 minutes, then you just spent $29.50 sitting in a parking spot. Wow! An ideal time would be 5 minutes from engine start to taxi, another 5 minutes for the power checks and pre-takeoff checks, then off to the hold line. This would entail about 10 minutes. I have observed some students on the ground for 30 minutes before they were ready to go to the hold line. Imagine spending $88.50 and you haven’t even taken the runway. The point of this conversation is to have the student be ready for the flight. They should know what they are doing.

Our flight program is demanding. Any student going through our program is receiving top-notch education, but it comes with a cost. That cost is two-fold; time and money. The general idea is that the more time you actually spend preparing for a flight, the less flight time you will need to reach the required standard. Another aspect of this thought is the frequency of flying. Fly often and you will spend considerable less time (and money in the long run). Is your student preparing for the flight, or just showing up? Also, are you preparing for your students flight, or are you just showing up. Your student will probable have preflight long briefs, quizzes, reading assignments, preflight planning, weather briefings, weight & balance checks, etc to perform prior to meeting with you for a flight. You have to spend time planning the mission. Where will you go? What order will you perform the maneuvers? What approaches will you fly? You should always have a game plan for every mission and not just ask your student “hey, what are we doing today?”.

The conclusion to a students’ flight training are the evaluation flights at the end of the training program: an End of Course flight and an FAA checkride. It is very important that your student is prepared to take both of these flights. Sometimes, an instructor may want to lighten their own schedule and dump a “problem” student into a checkride, hoping for a pass. All of your students deserve your best, so give it to them.

In the instrument curriculum, the initial pass rate on FAA checkrides was below 80%. This indicates that one-fifth of students were not prepared to take the FAA checkride. The Stage Check policy was drafted to help fix this problem. It states that any student failing either oral or flight portions, must receive additional training. This could be a minimum of three hours if deemed necessary. On a recent 86 EoC check given by me, the student performed so poorly that I gave a mandatory retraining of 3 hours. Look at the cost of this student not being prepared:

- Initial 86 EoC Check (1.8 hours) $318.60
- Retraining (3 hours) $531.00
- 86 EoC 2nd attempt (1.0 hours) $177.00

This student spent an extra $1,026.60 to finish up a second time. Were not done yet. Read & Initial #19 states: “It is expected that between lessons 84, 85 & 86, that the student demonstrates, on at least two different occasions, the ability to perform all tasks of the practical test to the standard of the practical test, in one flight. Failure to achieve these results will require additional training”. The student could spend another $531 to prove themselves. Now we are on to the big flight. The student will spend approximately $374 for the FAA checkride. What happens if the student fails this checkride? More retraining. More time and more money spent. Ouch!

Flying is expensive. It is imperative that your student is prepared for any ground or flight mission. Prepare your student well and you will save them time and money in the long run.
THE BACK SIDE

Plogs

Being properly prepared is crucial to being successful in any endeavor. When students show up unprepared for flying, the results tend to be anything but successful. Before the Stage Check Policy went into effect, I had the opportunity to fly a 186 EoC check with a student in the Seneca. At that time, students were spending about $5 per minute. Considering that the multi-engine course is 40 airplane hours, this adds up to a lot of money for anyone making normal progress. In order to get the most out of your money, you would want to be prepared. When you train your students, you should make sure they know what to prepare for the flight. What happens when the student is not prepared for the flight exam? Answer: a failure and a lot of wasted money.

This student was suppose to prepare to fly me to the Mason Jewet airport (KTEW) near Lansing. Since the oral was already completed by another instructor, I did not review any of the students planning. It wasn’t until in the air that I discovered the student did not have a plog or even a line drawn on the sectional chart. This really bothered me since the student was off course. The student was expecting to use the GPS to navigate the entire way to the airport. About a third of the way from Battle Creek, the student was 2nm off course and not correcting for the strong westerly wind. No preflight calculations, no line drawn on the sectional and now the examiner (me) turned off the GPS. At this point, I would expect any pilot to still be able to use pilotage and ded-reckoning to make it to the destination. The student could not use ded-reckoning since a plog was never completed. To make matters worse, this student was not reading the map and/or ground features very well. This student become lost by the half-way point, about 5 miles off course. It is entirely possible for any good pilot to become lost. If that happens, use the lost procedures taught to you during your student pilot days. Circle a prominent landmark and locate yourself on the chart, use nav aids to fix your position, or call ATC for help. This student circled the town of Leslie for 20 minutes ($100) trying in vain to do a VOR position fix. In the end, the student did not find the airfield and we returned to Battle Creek. The lesson was graded as a ‘D’. This student was unable to perform and/or lacked knowledge about important piloting skills.

During the training process, make sure to train your student for all of the skills that they may need to use in real life. Have them actually use them. Make your students figure out the takeoff and landing distances. Review their planning logs for cross-country flights. Challenge them to perform little used tasks like lost procedures. Your students will save a lot of money in the long run.

Quiz Time

Checkride questions:

Does a checkride candidate need to fill out an FAA Flight Plan for the checkride? Assume this is an initial Private Pilot checkride.

Yes

No

The meaning of DPE.

How far does a Commercial Pilot candidate need to plan the cross-country flight?

All the way.

Half way.

100nm.

Until fuel is needed.

See Dominic for the answers.