



How to Obtain a Ground Handling License in Nigeria

Description

Ground handling services play a crucial role in aviation safety and efficiency at Nigerian airports. If you or your company want to provide these services, obtaining a ground handling license from the Nigerian Civil Aviation Authority (NCAA) is mandatory. In this guide, we will outline the step-by-step process, list the necessary documents, and break down the costs involved so that even a layman can understand how to obtain this license.

Overview

A ground handling license authorises a company to offer services such as aircraft marshaling, towing, passenger assistance, baggage handling, and ramp operations. The license is governed by the NCAA Regulations under Part 18 – Air Transport Economic Regulations. The NCAA, the country's aviation regulatory body, ensures that all licensed operators maintain high standards of safety, efficiency, and quality control.

In Nigeria, there are two categories (or “parts”) for ground handling licenses; Part A and Part B, each with different fee structures and service scopes. Additionally, after the license is granted, an annual utilisation fee is required.

Step-by-Step Process for Obtaining a Ground Handling License

Step 1: Application Preparation

a. Determine the Type of Service

Decide which type of ground handling services your company will provide. The license application must state whether you plan to offer comprehensive services (Part A) or limited services (Part B).

b. Gather Essential Information

Before you apply, prepare a detailed company profile including:

- Company name and official address.
- Registered Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC) certificate.
- Memorandum and Articles of Association.
- Proof of minimum authorised share capital (N500,000,000 is required).
- Tax clearance certificates for the company and all directors (covering the last three years).
- Detailed exposition of your ownership and management structure.
- Evidence of previous experience or technical partnerships in aviation or ground handling services.

c. Complete Pre-Qualification Forms

Download and complete the pre-qualification processing forms available on the NCAA website under “Guidelines and Requirements for Licensing Ground Handling Companies.”

Step 2: Payment of the Processing Fee

The NCAA requires a non-refundable processing fee as part of the pre-qualification stage. This fee is paid by bank draft made payable to the Nigerian Civil Aviation Authority.

Processing Fee:

- **Amount:** ₦1,000,000
 - **Purpose:** To cover the administrative costs for reviewing your application.
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Step 3: Submission of Supporting Documents

Your application must be accompanied by a comprehensive set of supporting documents. These include:

- A certified copy of your Certificate of Incorporation.
- A certified copy of your Memorandum and Articles of Association.
- A Statement of Share Capital/Return of Allotment (Form CAC2) showing a minimum of ₦500,000,000.
- Tax clearance certificates for both the company and each director (for the past three years).
- A detailed company exposition outlining the management structure, technical expertise, and experience in providing ground handling services.
- A projected revenue and financial plan including profit and loss, cash flow, and balance sheet projections.
- An Operational Manual containing your Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for ground handling operations.

Ensure that all documents are certified true copies as required by the NCAA guidelines.

Step 4: Provisional Approval and Demonstration

Once your application and supporting documents are submitted:

- **Preliminary Review:** The NCAA will issue a provisional approval if your application meets the minimum requirements.
- **Equipment & Capability Demonstration:** You will be required to demonstrate your ability to provide safe, efficient ground handling services. This might include showing that you have the necessary equipment and trained personnel.
- **Site Inspection:** NCAA inspectors may conduct an audit of your facilities to verify compliance with safety and operational standards.

Step 5: Issuance of the Ground Handling License

Upon successful demonstration and satisfactory inspection, the NCAA will issue a substantive ground handling license. The validity of the license is ten (10) years from the date of issuance. However, before you can start operations, you must also pay the annual utilisation fee.

Step 6: Paying the Annual Utilisation Fee

To maintain your ground handling license, you must pay an annual utilisation fee to the NCAA.

Annual Utilisation Fee:

- **Amount:** ₦250,000 per annum
- **Purpose:** This fee is required to ensure continued compliance with NCAA safety and quality standards.

Fee Structure Table

The following table summarises the fees related to obtaining and maintaining a ground handling license in Nigeria:

Fee Type	Amount (NGN)	Description
Processing Fee	₦1,000,000	Non-refundable fee for pre-qualification processing.
Grant of Part A License	₦2,000,000	For comprehensive ground handling services (if applicable).
Grant of Part B License	₦250,000	For limited or specific ground handling services (if applicable).
Annual Utilisation Fee	₦250,000 per year	Fee payable annually to maintain the validity of the license.

Note: The exact category (Part A vs. Part B) applicable to your business depends on the scope of services you intend to offer. Please refer to the NCAA Schedule of Fees and Charges for any updates or changes.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

1. What is a Ground Handling License?

A ground handling license is an authorisation issued by the NCAA that allows a company to offer services such as aircraft marshaling, towing, passenger assistance, baggage handling, and other ramp services at Nigerian airports.

2. Who is eligible to apply for a ground handling license?

Any legally registered company in Nigeria with the required share capital, relevant experience, and the ability to meet safety and operational standards can apply. Applicants must provide all necessary documents, including tax clearances, CAC certificates, and evidence of technical competence.

3. What are the main steps to obtain the license?

The process includes:

- Preparing the application and gathering required documents.
- Completing pre-qualification forms.
- Paying the non-refundable processing fee.
- Submitting supporting documents.
- Undergoing a provisional approval process and facility demonstration.
- Receiving the substantive license and paying an annual utilisation fee.

4. How long is the license valid?

Once issued, the ground handling license is valid for ten (10) years. Renewal applications should be submitted at least six (6) months before the license expires.

5. What fees are involved?

The fees include a non-refundable processing fee of ₦1,000,000, a license grant fee (which may be ₦2,000,000 for Part A or ₦250,000 for Part B, depending on the scope of services), and an annual utilisation fee of ₦250,000.

6. What documents are required for the application?

Applicants must provide certified copies of the company's Certificate of Incorporation, Memorandum and Articles of Association, a Statement of Share Capital (Form CAC2), tax clearance certificates for the company and directors (last three years), a detailed company exposition, and an operational manual outlining your SOPs.

7. What if my application is rejected?

If your application is rejected, the NCAA may provide reasons for the decision. You can review these reasons, gather any additional required evidence, and reapply once the issues have been addressed.

8. Can I operate immediately after submission?

No. You must first obtain provisional approval and demonstrate your capability to deliver safe and efficient services. Only after successful inspection and the payment of the required fees will the substantive license be issued.

9. Are there any common misconceptions?

- **Misconception:** "The processing fee is refundable if my application is unsuccessful."
Fact: The processing fee is non-refundable, as it covers administrative costs regardless of the outcome.
- **Misconception:** "Renewal is a simple paperwork exercise."
Fact: Renewal requires updated documents, continued compliance with safety standards, and may involve re-inspection of facilities.

Common Misconceptions About Ground Handling Licensing

- **Misconception 1:** *"I can start operations immediately after submitting my application."*
Clarification: You must first secure provisional approval, pass the facility and safety inspections, and then receive the license after paying the required fees.
- **Misconception 2:** *"The non-refundable processing fee will be returned if my application is not approved."*
Clarification: The ₦1,000,000 processing fee is strictly non-refundable. It covers the administrative and evaluation costs incurred by the NCAA during the review process.

- **Misconception 3:** *“Renewing my license is a minor formality.”*

Clarification: Renewals require a fresh set of updated documents, evidence of operational performance, and adherence to current safety regulations. Renewal fees and compliance checks ensure continuous adherence to national and international standards.

Tips for a Successful Application

1. **Plan Ahead:**

Begin the application process at least six months before your intended start date. This allows ample time for document preparation, fee processing, and any additional information requests by the NCAA.

2. **Document Accuracy:**

Ensure that every document; especially certificates, financial statements, and tax clearances, is up-to-date, certified, and accurately reflects your company's status.

3. **Operational Manual:**

Your Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) manual should be comprehensive, covering every aspect of your ground handling operations. Include details on personnel training, safety management systems, and contingency plans.

4. **Financial Preparedness:**

Be ready to provide detailed financial projections and proof of your company's ability to maintain operations without external income for a specified period.

5. **Engage Professionals:**

If needed, consult with aviation consultants or legal experts familiar with NCAA regulations to ensure your application meets all requirements.

6. Maintain Communication:

Stay in regular contact with NCAA representatives during the application process to promptly address any queries or requests for additional information.

Conclusion

Obtaining a ground handling license in Nigeria involves a clearly defined process, from preparing the application and paying the processing fee to demonstrating your operational capabilities and undergoing inspections. By carefully following each step outlined in this guide and ensuring that all required documents are in order, your company can successfully secure a ground handling license and start offering vital services at Nigerian airports.

Remember, continuous compliance through annual utilisation fee payments and periodic renewals is essential for maintaining your license and operating safely under NCAA regulations. With thorough preparation and attention to detail, you will be well on your way to joining Nigeria's dynamic aviation sector.

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