

Early in your research, you will likely hear the terms “Part 61” and “Part 141.” Part 61 is a section of the FAA’s rules that governs the certification of a Certified Flight Instructor (CFI) and the training of pilots. A CFI instructing under Part 61 does not need to be part of a school. Part 141 governs the process for certifying the entire Pilot School (as the FAA calls it) and its syllabi. CSA is one of Utah’s very few private Part 141 flight schools, but also conducts training under Part 61, whichever is better-suited for the student’s long-term goals. In general, Part 141 courses provide the quickest path to Commercial Pilot certification, the most post-graduation job opportunities, and the lowest expenses for the student.

For background, federal laws govern everything about aviation. All of the nation’s federal-level laws are published as the CODE OF FEDERAL REGULATIONS (CFR), which is divided into 50 major divisions (“Titles”) that represent broad areas subject to federal regulation. As pilots, the one we care about is: Title 14 – Aeronautics and Space. That major division is further divided into Subtitles, Chapters, Subchapters, Parts, Subparts, Sections, Paragraphs, and then six levels of Subparagraphs. Everything we do as pilots is governed by just a handful of parts, and for this discussion we care about these two:

→ PART 61 – CERTIFICATION: PILOTS, FLIGHT INSTRUCTORS, AND GROUND INSTRUCTORS

→ PART 141 – PILOT SCHOOLS

Part 61 governs the certification of the Certified Flight Instructor (CFI), and then his or her one-on-one training of each flight student. Independent flight instructors teach under these rules. A school that teaches only under the rules of Part 61 is essentially a business entity with one or a group of independent instructors using the privileges of their own CFI certifications. The CFI may conduct the training as he or she deems best, because the school itself has no approved courseware or curricula that it is required by the FAA to follow. At the end of training, the CFI endorses the student for the final Practical Test given by an FAA Designated Pilot Examiner (DPE).

Part 141 governs the certification of the entire school, including syllabi, courseware, instructor qualifications, training aircraft models, aircraft maintenance processes, physical facilities, simulators, record-keeping, and much more. The instruction is provided by CFI certified under Part 61, and then further certified to teach within the Part 141 Pilot School rules.

In a Part 141 certificated school, individual lessons must be conducted in accordance with the FAA-approved course flow, and everything must be documented in accordance with the FAA-approved processes. End of Stage and End of Course check flights are conducted by designated Check Instructors to ensure that the student has the requisite skills and knowledge to move on to the next stage, or to the FAA Practical Test. The school is subject to continuous FAA oversight and physical inspections by its assigned Principal Operations Inspector, an FAA employee.

There is certainly a great deal of additional training and administrative burden to managing a certificated flight school. However, the benefits of all the extra structure and oversight of a Part 141 program are:

- ➔ Safer Operations. Earning and maintaining FAA certification requires exceptional performance at every level of the school, which enhances overall safety. From the school's leadership down to its dispatchers, employees are religiously monitoring safety-related processes to ensure that the operation remains fully in compliance with its own FAA-approved operational procedures, which are in excess of the basic rules published in 14 CFR 61 or 14 CFR 141.
- ➔ Quicker Completion. The FAA recognizes that the process results in superior pilots with less total flight time, and therefore lowers the minimum requirements for each approved course accordingly. For example, completing a Commercial Pilot Certification at CSA requires just 182 flight hours compared to the 250 hours required under Part 61 training.
- ➔ Lower Expense. Completing a Commercial Pilot Certification in just 182 flight hours compared to the 250 hours required under Part 61 training saves about \$16,000 in training expense.
- ➔ Tuition Assistance Availability. Part 141 programs are eligible for scholarships, student loans, and VA benefits.
- ➔ College Credit. Part 141 programs can be combined with collegiate programs to earn college credit for ground school and flight training, and to reduce the federal minimum flight hour requirement for airline pilots (Restricted ATP) in some cases.
- ➔ Greater Efficiency. Due to the tighter Course structure and a specific plan for each Lesson, there is no wasted flight time. The End of Stage and End of Course Check Flights ensure that students know at all times how they are progressing. Learning gaps can be remedied before sending the student to the FAA Practical Test.
- ➔ Greater Employability. Not only do Part 141 schools hire almost exclusively those with a Part 141 background, but many other flight operations appreciate the discipline and rigor of such an experience, which gives graduates a competitive edge.