PILOT FEEDBACK

Table of Contents

1 Control Pages

1.1 Document Identification

Document Identification	
Type	Policy
Version	1.0
Issue Date	15 JAN 2026
Identification	VATSIM-POL-PTD-25F

1.2 Revision Records

Revision Number	Date	Description of Change	Author
1.0	15 JAN 2026	Initial Release	RS

1.3 Related Documents

Document Name	Document Identification
Pilot Training Administration	VATSIM-POL-PTD-25A
PTD 1010 Pilot Feedback System	The predecessor to this document, which is cancelled upon this document's adoption.

2 Purpose

This document provides policy with respect to the administration of the VATSIM Pilot Training Department Pilot Feedback System.

3 Applicability

This policy applies to:

- Pilot Training Department Pilot Feedback staff
- VATSIM Pilots who hold or wish to hold a VATSIM Pilot Rating

4 System Purpose and Overview

4.1 System Purpose

Ever since the inception of the VATSIM network (and the predecessor from which it emerged), real-world aviation has evolved at a rapid pace. The technological capabilities of modern aircraft navigation and flight automation systems eclipse those of just a few years ago. Airspace sectors have become more congested, and the procedures undertaken within them have increased exponentially in complexity. The on-boarding and training process for VATSIM Air Traffic Controllers has increased in rigor correspondingly – but, users coming in to act as pilots, by-and-large, are still expected to acquire knowledge on their own. The Pilot Feedback System was instituted to address this widening gap. Its purpose is to begin to provide a more formalized process for referring pilots to resources, to increase their procedural knowledge and improve their compliance – thus providing some meat to the "Educate" portion of VATSIM's motto, "Aviate – Educate – Communicate".

4.2 System Overview

The Pilot Feedback System allows a VATSIM user (currently limited primarily to Supervisors, but eventually open to any and all account holders) to identify a pilot who demonstrates a knowledge gap which impacts their ability to operate cooperatively on the network. The pilot is referred to the Pilot Training Department for assistance and/or corrective action. The initial intake of the feedback report may be assigned to a Pilot Feedback Evaluator, who can perform an initial assessment of the issue. Cases requiring some intervention are then assigned to a Pilot Feedback Reviewer, who makes a more detailed determination as to the appropriate recourse. The pilot may be referred to training resources, and in some cases, the pilot's access to connect to VATSIM may be temporarily suspended until completion of the assigned training. More severe cases, particularly those which involve a disciplinary infraction on the part of the referred user, may be further escalated to the Assistant Vice President / Director of Operations

or the Vice President of Pilot Training for potential referral to VATSIM Standards and Compliance team.

4.3 Educational versus Disciplinary Referrals

It is important to distinguish between a pilot who is in need of education and one who is in need of disciplinary action. Many clauses within the VATSIM Code of Conduct address adequate knowledge and preparation. Users are required to know where they may connect (B1), know how and when to operate their transponder (B4), know what frequency to utilize when not under active ATC (B5), understand the airspace, procedures, and basic instructions they may be issued on the ground or in the air (B8), and know how to file a flight plan including understanding the meaning of the navigation and communication designators applicable to their simulated aircraft and equipment (B10). Infractions of these clauses therefore technically constitute violations of the Code of Conduct – but often stem from a lack of understanding of the aviation concepts rather than a willful and deliberate disregard for proper behavior.

The concept of "Just Culture" provides a framework for understanding the difference between the two situations. Rather than focusing on blame, the focus is on recognizing and correcting the systemic deficiency which led to the incident. In our case, the systemic deficiency is the lack of formal pilot training requirements before joining the network. The corrective action is to point the pilot toward the educational resource which contains the knowledge they lacked or needed review of, which led to their non-compliance. The hope is that, armed with the knowledge in question, the pilot will know how to avoid repeating a similar infraction.

At some point, however, a pilot's continued display of inadequate preparation crosses the line from an educational need into a disciplinary one. If a pilot exhibits a larger pattern of behavior which demonstrates a lack of ability – or lack of an interest in attempting – to improve their compliance, or if a matter comes through the Pilot Feedback System which is inherently more appropriately handled as a disciplinary infraction, it may be escalated to the Assistant Vice President / Director of Operations or the Vice President of Pilot Training for proper disposition.

5 System Personnel

5.1 Department Leadership

The Pilot Training Department Leadership consists of the Vice President of Pilot Training (VATGOV11), and the Assistant Vice President / Director of Operations.

The Vice President of Pilot Training represents the Department on the VATSIM Board of Governors, creates and obtains said Board approval for the policies and procedures by which this System operates, provides said Board with periodic updates as to the performance of the System based on Key Performance Indicator data, and acts as one of the co-primary points of escalation for Feedback cases requiring a disciplinary rather than an educational response.

The Assistant Vice President / Director of Operations coordinates with the VATSIM Technology Department as the technical lead for the Pilot Feedback System, oversees the on-boarding and removal of staff working within the System, and oversees the System-Specific Staff to ensure the System functions within the policies, procedures, and guidelines laid forth. The AVP / Director of Ops is also a co-primary point of escalation for Feedback cases which become disciplinary cases, when necessary.

The Vice President and Assistant Vice President jointly assess overall network trends in pilot proficiency and deficiency as exemplified within the Pilot Feedback System, which inform on other functions within the Pilot Training Department. They also jointly assess the System's caseload versus its capacity – and determine when the portal for initiating a Pilot Feedback case may be widened for greater network-wide access.

5.2   System-Specific Staff

The System-Specific Staff for the Pilot Feedback System include the Pilot Feedback Manager, a staff of Pilot Feedback Reviewers (including one "Senior"), and a further staff of Pilot Feedback Evaluators.
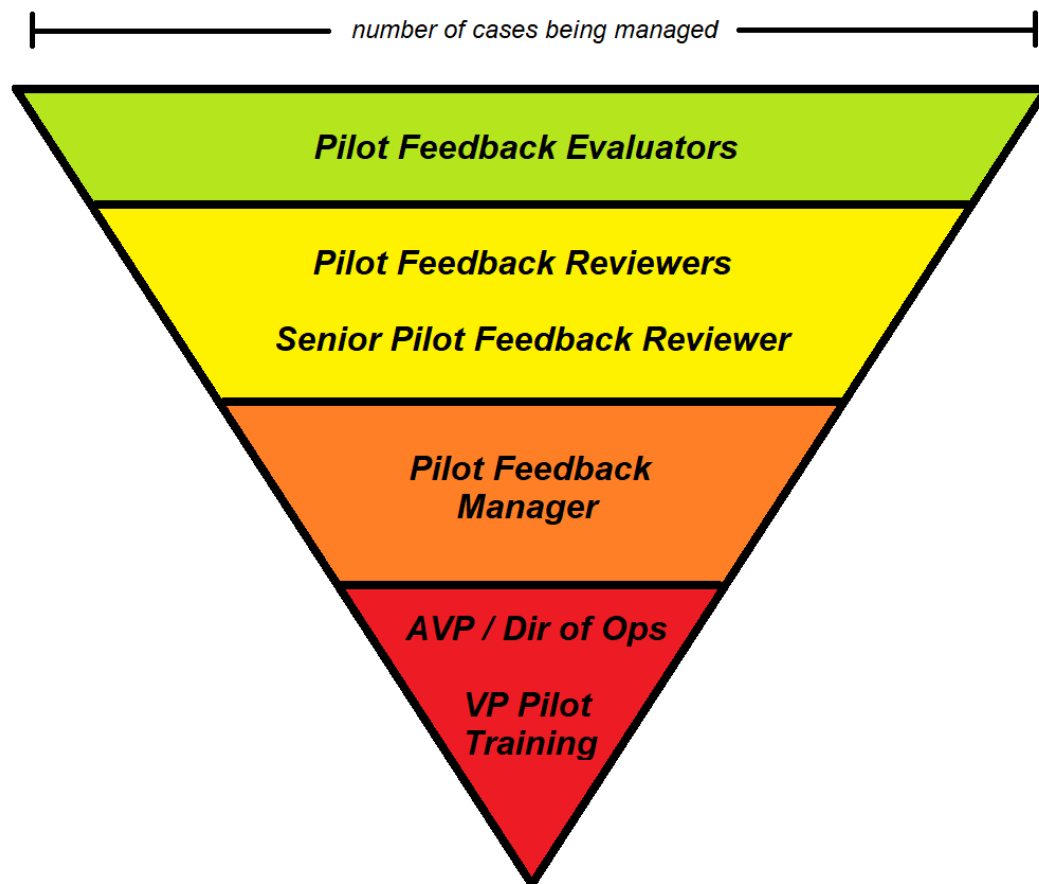
The Pilot Feedback Manager oversees the staff of Pilot Feedback Reviewers and Evaluators to ensure that staff working within the System are working within the policies, procedures, and guidelines laid forth by the Department leadership. The Manager may provide additional guidance as necessary to clarify or streamline the operation of the System. The Manager also reviews any cases flagged by staff for escalation for action requiring a higher level of authority than Pilot Feedback Reviewers. The Manager evaluates the overall case workload and adjusts staffing levels and division of labor as needed. The Manager assists with overall data collection and analysis to assist the Assistant Vice President and Vice President in their assessment of overall network trends in pilot proficiency and deficiency, which inform on other functions within the Pilot Training Department.

Pilot Feedback Reviewers (including one designated as the "Senior" Reviewer) are the primary agents who drive the Pilot Feedback System. When a feedback case is identified as one which requires the referred user to be contacted with some guidance, the Pilot Feedback Reviewer will determine the type and extent of that guidance, and whether the user's access to connect to VATSIM shall remain uninterrupted in the meantime. The Reviewer will add comments to the Feedback case in the web portal (wherein referred users may view cases for which they are the referred subject) to explain the situation and / or infraction which occurred, and describe the training resource they are recommending. If the Reviewer recommends that the user's account access should be withheld until completion, the Reviewer will escalate the case to the Pilot Feedback Manager.

Pilot Feedback Evaluators are the first line of intake for referred user Feedback cases. While Pilot Feedback Reviewers may also be assigned unreviewed cases if workload permits, Pilot Feedback Evaluators augment the intake process, thus expanding the overall system capacity. Evaluators make an initial assessment of each assigned Pilot Feedback case, and cases requiring some intervention are then assigned to a Pilot Feedback Reviewer for further action.

Cases which do not describe a pilot deviation – or are otherwise unable to be substantiated – may be closed.

The System staffing model is designed as that of a "hierarchical funnel" with each layer of the staff handling a narrowed caseload. At any point, a staff member from deeper in the hierarchy may elect to assign themselves a case from further up, to assist with workload balancing as needed.

number of cases being managed

Pilot Feedback Evaluators

Pilot Feedback Reviewers

Senior Pilot Feedback Reviewer

Pilot Feedback Manager

AVP / Dir of Ops

VP Pilot Training

6 Feedback Case Intake

6.1 Present Modes of Feedback Case Creation

At present, the primary mode for the creation of a Feedback case is through the "PTD Referral" function within Terminal. VATSIM account holders who have elevated data access may use this function to initiate a Pilot Feedback report. Since the eventual goal is that users may initiate reports for pilots with whom they personally had an interaction, there is no particular restriction

regarding whether the person initiating the case was or was not involved in the incident which led to the report.

Members of the Pilot Training Department and others who have access to the Pilot Feedback System may also use the "New Feedback" form within the web portal itself to initiate a report. They may do so whether they were personally involved in an interaction with the pilot being reported, or witnessed such an interaction, or heard second-hand about the interaction. However, to avoid conflict of interest, Pilot Training Department members may take no *further* action on Feedback cases they themselves submitted or had any other form of involvement in.

6.2 Planned Future Expansion

The Pilot Feedback System is still in prototype mode, and thus the primary vehicle for Feedback Case intake has for now intentionally been limited primarily to Network Supervisors. However, the eventual vision is for the system to allow any VATSIM account holder to initiate a report identifying a pilot as one who may need some guidance from the Pilot Training Department – even themselves, if desired! The mechanism for this may be by means of a direct entry into the Pilot Feedback System Web Portal, and/or could be integrated somehow into VATSIM ATC tools if desired and supported.

Between the present and the goal lie any number of possible models for gradual rollout. The System could be made available within specific VATSIM Subdivisions / Divisions / Regions, or to Controllers with certain Controller Ratings, or some combination thereof, before it is eventually opened up to all account holders. Rollout methods will be coordinated by the Vice President of Pilot Training with the appropriate members of the Board of Governors. The key will be to meter the rollout cautiously while assessing the impact on caseload versus the capacity of the System and its staff.

7 Feedback Case Handling

7.1 General Outline for Case Handling and / or Escalation

In the below, "case agent" refers to whomever is presently assigned to review the Feedback case in question. This could be a Pilot Feedback Evaluator, Pilot Feedback Reviewer, Pilot Feedback Manager, Assistant Vice President / Director of Operations, or the Vice President of Pilot Training.

When determining the appropriate outcome for the case, case agents may consider:

- the referrer's level of experience, certification, past activity as noted within Pilot Feedback records (or Terminal records, if applicable), and overall credibility;
- any network or third-party tracking stats or other logs – or livestream VODs or other recordings – which may corroborate or refute the referrer's account of the incident;
- the severity of the infraction described;

- the level of disruption the infraction caused;
- the referred pilot's level of experience (in terms of both account longevity and logged pilot hours);
- the referred pilot's level of certification (i.e. any Pilot Ratings they may have attained);
- the referred pilot's past history of Pilot Feedback referrals (and/or other account notes logged in the pilot's Terminal record, if applicable);
- any other factor which may be unique to the case at hand.

Once a case has been received into the Pilot Feedback System, the process for handing it will generally follow the below outline.

7.1.1   Initial Assessment. A Pilot Feedback Evaluator examines the report to assess it on the basis of three questions: (1) Can the contents of the report be substantiated as true or false? (2) Does the report describe a pilot deviation? (3) Does the person who initiated the report demonstrate a good understanding of the procedure or policy they allege was violated?

If the contents of the report cannot be substantiated as true or false (i.e. it is inconclusive), the case may be closed without further action.

If the report can be substantiated as true and describes a pilot deviation, it must be escalated to a Pilot Feedback Reviewer for further evaluation and action.

If the report either (a) can be substantiated as false or (b) does not describe a pilot deviation (i.e. it demonstrates that the case's initiator has a flawed understanding of the procedure which was alleged to have been violated), and the case's initiator is an Air Traffic Controller, the Evaluator may close the Pilot Feedback case and should leave a Controller Feedback note for the initiating controller via the web portal or other means published by the appropriate facility.

If the report either (a) can be substantiated as false or (b) does not describe a pilot deviation (i.e. it demonstrates that the case's initiator has a flawed understanding of the procedure which was alleged to have been violated), and the case's initiator is a pilot, it must be escalated to a Pilot Feedback Reviewer for further evaluation and action.

7.1.2   Assessment of Training and / or Other Action Required. A <u>Pilot Feedback Reviewer</u> examines the report. From this point forward, the subject of the report and the user making the referral, plus any other parties mentioned in the report, are all equally under review. For any instance in which a Pilot Feedback Reviewer feels that any other user aside from the referred user is in need of some level of education or corrective action, the Reviewer shall initiate a new case within the Pilot Feedback System (with the party in need of action as the subject, and the report describing that party's role in the incident), and assign it to themselves for adjudication in parallel. Case notes should be added to each in order to cross-reference them to one another. All outcomes below shall then refer to each individual case separately.

For cases in which the incident description *cannot be substantiated or does not describe a pilot deviation*, the Pilot Feedback Reviewer may choose to close the case without further action.

In cases with very *minor infractions*, the Pilot Feedback Reviewer may choose to add a note to the case (which will be seen by the referred user) explaining the situation and/or deviation, but may decide that no further action is necessary. The Reviewer may then immediately close the case.

For *moderate infractions*, the Pilot Feedback Reviewer may decide that assignment to additional training for the referred user's education or review may be merited, but, the infraction does not merit suspension of the user's access to connect to VATSIM in the meantime. (This could also be the outcome in a case where the referred user needs some education or review, but, suspension options are no longer available due to the case's age being greater than 96 hours.) The Reviewer may add a note to the case requesting the referred user to complete the pertinent training and reply within the Pilot Feedback System once complete. Once this has been done, the Reviewer may close the case.

For *more pressing infractions*, the Pilot Feedback Reviewer may feel that assignment to additional training for the referred user – and suspension of their network access until completion – is merited. (Note that this action is only available if the incident is less than 96 hours old.) This action must be escalated to the Pilot Feedback Manager who may assign the training and effect the user's suspension pending completion. After the user has completed the training, they may open a Support Ticket at

support.vatsim.net, with Pilot Training selected as the destination department, to alert us that this has been done. The Pilot Training Manager will contact the user to verify that they better understand the situation and expectations. Once this has been completed, the Pilot Training Manager may then effect the user's reinstatement to network access and close the case.

For *infractions which (a) are severe, or (b) represent a continuing pattern of behavior which does not seem to be improving, or (c) are inherently disciplinary in nature*, the Pilot Feedback Reviewer must escalate the case to the Pilot Feedback Manager. The Pilot Feedback Manager may then choose to escalate the issue further to the Assistant

Vice President / Director of Operations or to the Vice President for further action. (Note that this action is only available if the incident is less than 96 hours old.) Once acted upon in this manner, the case may be closed within the Pilot Feedback System.

For any of the above which merit educational or corrective action toward an Air Traffic Controller, the Pilot Feedback Reviewer should create a Controller Feedback note via the web portal or other means published by the appropriate facility.

7.1.3   Assessment for Higher Sanction Levels. As stated above, the Pilot Feedback Manager must be assigned any case (which is less than 96 hours old) that involves:

- a referred user who is in need of suspension pending training completion;
- a referred user who is in need of escalation to the Standards and Compliance team due to an infraction which exhibits recurrent and non-improving compliance and/or an inherently disciplinary issue, which the Assistant Vice President / Director of Operations or the Vice President must refer to the Standards and Compliance team.

When a user is suspended from network access pending completion of required training, a notice must be sent which contains, at a minimum:

- a reference to Code of Regulations section 6.05C;
- a description of the observations which led to the action;
- a directive regarding the training course which has been assigned;
- instructions (i.e. a directive to initiate a Support Ticket) on how to contact the Pilot Training Department to advise training completion;
- instructions (i.e. a directive to initiate a Support Ticket) on how to contact the Pilot Training Department to ask questions and/or initiate an appeal of the decision.

A template for the message is as follows:

Per VATSIM Code of Regulations section 6.05C, your account is suspended pending completion of further training. {insert description of observations which led to this decision here.} At this time, please navigate to learn.vatsim.net and complete {insert name(s) of course(s) to complete here}. When completed, navigate to support.vatsim.net and open a Support Ticket, selecting Pilot Training as the destination department, to advise us you have done so. We will contact you to verify that you understand its contents as well as expectations when connected to VATSIM. At that time we will reinstate your access to the network. You may also open a Support Ticket under Pilot Training if you have questions in the meantime, or if you wish to initiate an appeal of this decision.

7.2 Standards of Processing Time

It is the goal of the Pilot Training Department that between the time a Feedback report is filed and the time the referred user is contacted via e-mail to discuss the case, a maximum of 96 hours will have elapsed. After this point, a user may not be suspended for their actions. The

Pilot Training Department may, at their option, still choose to reach out to provide guidance and other optional recommended training resources.

For users who are contacted within 96 hours and suspended from network access pending completion of additional training, the user must recontact the Pilot Training Department to signify that they have completed the assigned training. Complete reinstatement of the referred user's access to connect to VATSIM is dependent upon verification of some level of understanding of the material. As part of this will depend on prompt and clear communication from the referred user, no specific timeframe may be guaranteed. However, per Code of Regulations section 6.05(C), "Pilot Suspension with Required Training", anytime a pilot user who has been suspended pending training (a) has satisfactorily demonstrated understanding of the training assigned or (b) has a message to the Pilot Training Department indicating their completion of the assigned training, and said message has gone unanswered for 48 hours or more, the user's access to connect to VATSIM must be immediately restored.

7.3   Standards of Professionalism

As the Pilot Training Department is meant to be a vehicle for education rather than discipline, all correspondence between Pilot Feedback System personnel and referred or referring parties must be conducted in a clear, professional, and constructive manner. Furthermore, when describing an account of an incident for the benefit of the referred user, said descriptions shall always be limited to facts and devoid of opinions.

7.4   User Right of Appeal

Pursuant to VATSIM Code of Regulations section 6.05(C), "Pilot Suspension with Required Training", any referred user whose access to connect to VATSIM is suspended pending completion of assigned training may request an appeal of the decision. The appeal must be made in writing within 7 days of the action, via Support Ticket at support.vatsim.net with the Pilot Training Department as the ticket destination. Between the time an appeal request is received and responded to, a maximum of 96 hours will have elapsed. Appeals will be adjudicated by the Pilot Training Department's Assistant Vice President / Director of Operations, and may be appealed on a second level (also via Support Ticket) to the VATSIM Vice President of Pilot Training. All appeal decisions from the VATSIM Vice President of Pilot Training on suspensions with mandatory training assignments shall be considered final.

8   System Personnel Policies and Procedures

8.1   Required Qualifications for Personnel

The Pilot Feedback Manager, as well as Pilot Feedback Reviewers (including the Senior Reviewer), are required to have elevated data access in order to function in their positions. The requirements to qualify for elevated access, the process for obtaining it, the responsibilities for

its proper use, the cautions against and consequences for its misuse, and terms of its surrender are spelled out in great detail in Section 4 of Policy PTD-25A, Pilot Training Department Administration Policy and Procedures. All personnel functioning under the Pilot Feedback System as Pilot Feedback Reviewers, or higher in the hierarchy, must be aware of – and must strictly adhere to – all provisions within all paragraphs of that Section.

Because Pilot Feedback Evaluators do not require access to the VATSIM Terminal system, they may be brought on board with a lower level of qualification and experience, allowing for a deeper pool of potential candidates (and, as such, could be considered "junior" or "apprentice" Pilot Feedback Reviewers working toward eventual full certification in that position). However, they are still representatives of the Pilot Training Department and still must embody a spirit of understanding the value of following a community's established rules and guidelines. Additionally, they must have sufficient time and experience on the network to be able to determine whether a referred Feedback case has merit. Thus a minimum of one year on the network with a moderate amount of activity, and a Terminal record free of substantial disciplinary remarks over the most recent twelve months, is required.

8.2   Selection of Personnel

Vacancies for the Pilot Feedback Manager, Pilot Feedback Reviewer, and Pilot Feedback Evaluator positions shall be managed with job postings via my.vatsim.net and the "VATSIM Vacancies" portal. Announcements shall be posted via VATSIM social media channels as deemed appropriate by the Vice President of Pilot Training and the Vice President of Marketing and Communications, or, may be advertised only within the Pilot Training Department if desired. Application deadlines are subject to the discretion of the hiring manager for each position; applications to join the team of Pilot Feedback Reviewers and Evaluators may be accepted on an ongoing basis at the discretion of the hiring manager. All appointments for these positions shall be at the discretion of the hiring manager, subject to review by those higher in the hierarchy within the Pilot Training Department. The hiring manager for Pilot Feedback Reviewers shall also designate a Senior Pilot Feedback Reviewer. The person holding the "Senior" designation may or may not be the one with the most longevity within the position, at the discretion of the hiring manager.

The hiring manager for the Pilot Feedback Manager is the Assistant Vice President / Director of Operations. The hiring manager for Pilot Feedback Reviewers and Evaluators is the Pilot Feedback Manager. In the case of an absence or vacancy, the designation of hiring manager falls to the next-highest position within the hierarchy.

8.3   On-Boarding of Personnel

The on-boarding of the Pilot Feedback Manager and Pilot Feedback Reviewers includes the Elevated Access Training and access to Terminal as described in Policy PTD-25A. The Vice President of Pilot Training manages @vatsim.net email accounts within the Pilot Training Department, and will create one if necessary for a newly appointed member of the Pilot Feedback team. The Pilot Feedback Manager provides access to the Pilot Feedback Portal and

the appropriate roles within the Pilot Training Department Discord for coordination. The Pilot Feedback Manager then provides all necessary training and guidance for case handling and escalation, including required activity levels and all other guidelines, policies, and procedures contained within this document and related documents.

8.4   Monitoring and Assessment of Personnel

All activity by Pilot Feedback Reviewers and Evaluators within the Pilot Feedback System (and within VATSIM Terminal, as applicable) is logged and subject to periodic review and audit. The Senior Pilot Feedback Reviewer and Pilot Feedback Manager, and anyone higher in the Pilot Training Department hierarchy, reserve the right to perform such reviews and audits at any time, with or without advance notice. The review or audit may address the number of cases handled, and any activity associated with such handling to include correspondence with the involved parties, notes added to the Pilot Feedback System and/or VATSIM Terminal, and actions taken with the account of any involved party. The person conducting the review or audit shall advise the subject staff member of its results, and will confer with the staff member over any action, note, or other correspondence which does not conform to the policies and procedures outlined in this document.

8.5   Required Activity Levels

The Senior Pilot Feedback Reviewer, Pilot Feedback Manager, and those higher in the Pilot Training Department hierarchy reserve the right to set minimum requirements for activity for Pilot Feedback Reviewers and Evaluators, in terms of the number of cases per week or month that they handle. Such requirements are generally necessary to maintain the overall capacity of the Pilot Feedback System. Such requirements, and any adjustments or changes to the mandated case volume, must be equitably set among the staff of Pilot Feedback Reviewers and Evaluators, and clearly communicated to the staff in a pre-agreed fashion. Staff who fail to maintain these minimum requirements may be subject to counseling, warning, and/or eventual removal from their staff position.

8.6   Counseling or Reprimand of Personnel

At any time, activity which fails to comply with the policies and procedures laid out within this document may come to the attention of the Senior Pilot Feedback Reviewer, Pilot Feedback Manager, and/or those higher in the Pilot Training Department hierarchy. This may include a failure to maintain minimum activity levels as outlined in the previous section, or any inaction, action, note, or other correspondence undertaken during the performance of duties of a Pilot Feedback Reviewer or Evaluator which somehow violates these policies and procedures. This may be the result of a formal review or audit, an informal review ("spot-check"), or a complaint or notification from an involved party or other outside party.

The person conducting the review, audit, or investigation in question shall advise the subject staff member of its results, and will confer with the staff member over any inaction, action, note, or other correspondence which does not conform to the policies and procedures outlined in this

document. Such staff members may be subject to counseling, warning, and/or eventual removal from their staff position.

8.7   Removal or Voluntary Resignation of Personnel

Upon separation from duties within the Pilot Feedback System (whether voluntary, involuntary due to inactivity, or involuntary due to misconduct), the Pilot Feedback Manager or higher person in the Pilot Training Department hierarchy will remove their administrative access to the Pilot Feedback Portal and the appropriate Discord roles for team coordination and collaboration. The Vice President of Pilot Training will coordinate with the Vice President of Membership to have Elevated Data Access removed (as appropriate – unless the user in question will hold another position which requires it). The Vice President of Pilot Training will also close the @vatsim.net email account associated with the user (again, unless the user will be holding another position which requires it).