New GAR Procedure for UK Flights

David Mumford
14 July, 2024

Effective April 2024, there are some big changes to the UK's General Aviation Report (GAR) submission for international flights. The main changes:

- **The GAR form is now required for departures (not just arrivals).**

- **You have to submit it via an online portal, or through a third-party app (no longer directly to UK Border Force via email).**

- **If you get it wrong, you can now get fined up to £10,000 (there were no fines before). These apply to both the operator AND the captain.**

- **NEW: July 2024: Check below for the common gotchas on GAR submissions, and what to do if you have any last-minute changes.**

These new rules apply to all international flights arriving/departing the UK (including within the Common Travel Area: Ireland, the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands).

You can read the rules in full on the UK Government website, but here's a summary of the main points:

How to submit the GAR

You need to submit info online about the flight and crew/pax, no earlier than 48 hours and no later than 2 hours prior to the expected time of departure. There are 3 ways to do this:

1. The government's free-to-use online portal.
Alternatively, you can download this GAR template (Excel doc), complete it electronically and upload it to the portal.

2. Approved third-party applications
– Rocket Route

– OnlineGAR

3. Direct connections
– FB01
– Streamlane
– Mobile-Edge

More info on the UK government site here.

After you submit the GAR, **you should get a response telling you whether that crew/pax is allowed to travel.** It will be one of the following (thanks to our friends at FlyingInIreland for this table):

Response Message	Action
Valid permission to travel	The Home Office can find a valid permission to travel for the person. Pilots, operators and agents are not required to check visas, but Passport or Travel Document checks still apply. They must check that the passport or travel document presented is genuine and valid, and that the person is the rightful holder. For more information on checking passports and travel documents click here Guidance on examining identity documents (publishing.service.gov.uk)
Authority to carry granted	Pilots, operators and agents are required to check visas for Visa Nationals. Passport or Travel Document checks apply for all passengers. They must check that the passport or travel document presented is genuine and valid and that the person is the rightful holder. For more information on checking passports and travel documents click here Guidance on examining identity documents (publishing.service.gov.uk) Follow this link to check visa requirements Check if you need a UK visa – GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
Authority to carry refused. DO NOT BOARD.	This response message will not be displayed on the screen. Pilots, operators and agents will be instructed not to board an individual (NO BOARD) via a call and email when Authority to Carry (ATC) has been refused.

Given the new fines now in place for getting it wrong, you may find that **your local handling agent is no longer able/willing to submit the GAR for you.**

So if you're not already using a third-party application to submit the GAR for you, it looks like the best option is to sign up for an online account and file it yourself direct!

Submit a General Aviation Report (GAR)

Use this service to:

- Submit a GAR
- View or cancel a GAR and edit draft GARs
- Add, remove or manage people on your flight

Start now >

Getting it wrong

Again, check the official guidance on this, but here's what "getting it wrong" basically means:

- Failing to provide correct info about the flight and people on board.

- Not submitting it within the required timeframe (no earlier than 48 hours and no later than 2 hours prior to the expected time of departure).

- Not doing it in the fight format (i.e. through the web portal or via an approved third party).

The big things to know / watch out for:

- **Fines:** Getting it wrong could mean a fine for the *"owner or agent and captain"*. So that means the operator AND captain are subject to enforcement action and fines. These start at £5,000 for first-time offenders (ouch!), subsequent breaches start at £7500, followed by the maximum of £10,000.

- **Errors on the GAR submission:** Watch out for incorrect spelling of names, not using the full names as shown on passports, and incorrect crew assignment (which pilot is the PIC). Anything like this is likely to get you a "warning" from UK Customs on arrival, and potentially a fine if it happens again.

- **Last minute changes:** Bad news. If you get an extra passenger last minute, or someone shows up with a different passport than the one you sent on the GAR submission, you have to file a new GAR and then wait 2 hours until you depart. Same applies if you change your arrival airport in the UK. One exception here: if a passenger was provided on the GAR and they do not travel, a new GAR is not required to be submitted.

- **Diverts:** If you have to divert due to weather, that's fine. If this happens, UK Border Force want you to call them if you can, on +44 300 123 2012. Make sure you're diverting to the alternate listed on your flight plan (should also be an international airport with Customs). If you're diverting somewhere other than what's listed on your flight plan (i.e. it's an emergency), call UK Border Force after you land to explain.

- **Late departures:** If the flight will operate on the same day, albeit later, no new GAR

submission is required. If a flight is delayed to the next calendar day, a new GAR must be submitted.

- **Early departures:** If you depart early headed to the UK, don't update the GAR! ***Opsgroup member report:*** *We had a flight to UK that departed 45 mins early, so we thought it wise to update the GAR to correct ETA. This resulted in a UK Customs warning for 'submitting' a GAR once flight airborne (8hr leg). We've been told that we should not have updated the ETA and it is UK Customs' responsibility to keep up to date with the ETA.*

More info

Check out this page from PNR-Go. It has a bunch more info for pilots and operators, including a recent webinar recording plus an extensive Q&A on this topic.