

vZHU ARTCC

General Policy

vZHU-P001

Revision 5



Not for real world use.
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Changes

1. Rev.5
 - a. Comprehensive rewrite replacing existing vZHU Standard Operating Procedures published August 20, 2014.
 - b. Formatting in accordance with new documentation standards.
 - c. Eliminated duplication of VATUSA and VATSIM policies.
 - d. Clarification of existing statements.
 - e. Eliminated ambiguous and superfluous statements.
 - f. Addition of separate staff activity requirements (3.5.1).

1. General

1.1. Purpose of this Policy

This document establishes and provides the formal rules, regulations, procedures and guidelines which govern all controllers and members operating within the vZHU ARTCC. This document establishes the validity of any additional vZHU controlled documentation.

This document is considered a supplement to any VATSIM, Executive Committee, VATNA, and VATUSA policies, procedures, and controlled documentation.

1.2. Audience

All vZHU controllers and visitors.

1.3. Distribution

This document is authorized for unrestricted public release.

1.4. Effective

This policy is effective immediately and cancels any previous revisions.

1.5. Cancellation

This policy is effective until superseded by a newer revision.

2. Acronyms

2.1.	ARTCC	Air Route Traffic Control Center
2.2.	ATD	Air Traffic Director (VATUSA)
2.3.	ATM	Air Traffic Manager (vZHU)
2.4.	DATM	Deputy Air Traffic Manager (vZHU)
2.5.	EC	Events Coordinator (vZHU)
2.6.	GRP	Global Ratings Policy (VATSIM)
2.7.	LOA	Letter of Agreement
2.8.	TA	Training Administrator (vZHU)
2.9.	TD	Training Director (VATUSA)
2.10.	SOP	Standard Operating Procedures
2.11.	VATNA	North American region of VATSIM
2.12.	VATUSA	USA Division of VATNA

3. ARTCC Operations

3.1. Staff Positions

3.1.1. Air Traffic Manager (ATM)

3.1.1.1. Responsibilities

- Reports to the Southern Region ATD and oversees operations and management for vZHU ARTCC.
- Maintains an online presence within the facility and on the VATSIM network.
- Functions as a VATUSA staff member and attends meetings as necessary to discuss and stay abreast of VATUSA issues and policies.
- Initiates and obtains ATD and other required approval(s) for ARTCC SOPs, LOAs, policies, procedures, and other appropriate documentation.
- Develops and maintains facility SOPs, LOAs, policies, procedures, and other documentation.
- Establishes and defines the duties of the DATM position. Submits selection to the ATD for approval.
- Establishes and defines the duties of the TA position. Submits selection to the ATD and VATUSA TD for approval.
- Establishes and defined the duties of other ARTCC staff positions.
- Appoints, manages, and removes vZHU ARTCC staff members.
- Manages events that may affect the vZHU ARTCC airspace.
- Manages the vZHU ARTCC roster.
- Provides Guidance and help to assigned controllers; optionally may establish a staff of “mentors” to assist with training.
- Works with or delegates liaison with Regional and Division-level ECs on events as necessary.
- Recommends disciplinary action to the Southern Region ATD when appropriate.

3.1.1.2. Requirements

- Must have at least a Controller (C1) rating.
- Must be an active member of the network in good standing.

3.1.2. Deputy Air Traffic Manager (DATM)

3.1.2.1. Responsibilities

- Reports to and serves at the pleasure of the vZHU ATM.
- Maintains an online presence within the facility and on the VATSIM network.
- Functions as a vZHU ARTCC staff member and attends meetings as necessary.
- Provides for coordination of position assignments and position restrictions when necessary.
- Provides mentorship and guidance to vZHU home and visiting controllers.
- Acts as the acting ATM at the request of, or in the absence of, the ATM.
- Assists in the management of events that may affect the vZHU ARTCC's airspace.
- Assists in management of the VATUSA vZHU roster.
- Other duties as assigned or delegated by the vZHU ATM.

3.1.3. Requirements

- Must have at least a Controller (C1) rating.
- Must be an active member of the network in good standing.
- Must have leadership experience, real-world and/or VATSIM.

3.1.4. Training Administrator (TA)

3.1.4.1. Responsibilities

- Reports to and serves at the pleasure of the vZHU ATM and VATUSA TD.
- Maintains an online presence within the facility and on the VATSIM network.
- Functions as a vZHU ARTCC staff member and attends meetings as necessary.
- Develops, maintains, updates, and manages the training program and related material..
- Responsible for appointing and managing vZHU instructors and mentors.
- Approves exam assignments for students and finalizes promotions.

3.1.4.2. Requirements

- Must have at least a Controller (C1) rating.
- Must be eligible to hold the Senior Instructor (I3) rating.
- Must be an active member of the network in good standing.
- Must have instruction experience, real-world and/or VATSIM.
- Must have leadership experience, real-world and/or VATSIM.

3.1.5. Events Coordinator (EC)

3.1.5.1. **Responsibilities**

- Reports to and serves at the pleasure of the vZHU ATM.
- Maintains an online presence within the facility and on the VATSIM network.
- Functions as a vZHU ARTCC staff member and attends meetings as necessary.
- Identifies and develops events to generate traffic and promote vZHU ARTCC.
- Develops and distributes marketing materials to promote vZHU events.
- Implements and oversees approved events.
- Acts as CIC during vZHU events.
- Coordinates with neighboring ARTCCs to arrange support for vZHU events.
- Coordinates with neighboring ARTCCs to provide vZHU support.
- Maintains relationships with VAs and coordinates support for VA hosted events.

3.1.5.2. **Requirements**

- Must have at least a Senior Student (S3) rating, but a Controller (C1) rating is preferred.
- Must be an active member of the network in good standing.

3.1.6. Webmaster (WM)

3.1.6.1. **Responsibilities**

- Reports to and serves at the pleasure of the vZHU ATM.
- Maintains an online presence within the facility and on the VATSIM network.
- Functions as a vZHU ARTCC staff member and attends meetings as necessary.
- Responsible for the development, maintenance, and upkeep of the website.
- Manages the website and related applications.
- Ensures compliance with VATSIM, VATNA, VATUSA, and vZHU rules and policies regarding ARTCC websites, data, and software.

3.1.6.2. **Requirements**

- Must have at least a Senior Student (S3) rating.
- Must be an active member of the network in good standing.
- Must possess sufficient technical knowledge to execute the responsibilities of the position.

3.1.7. Facilities Engineer (FE)

3.1.7.1. Responsibilities

- Reports to and serves at the pleasure of the vZHU ATM.
- Maintains an online presence within the facility and on the VATSIM network.
- Functions as a vZHU ARTCC staff member and attends meetings as necessary.
- Maintains and updates controller client data files.
- Maintains and updates vATIS facilities files.
- Maintains and updates any other appropriate data files as directed by the ATM.
- Ensure that all controller data files present the current procedures and navigation data.

3.1.7.2. Requirements

- Must have at least a Senior Student (S3) rating, but a Controller (C1) rating is preferred.
- Must be an active member of the network in good standing.
- Must possess sufficient technical knowledge to execute the responsibilities of the position.

3.2. Staff Assistants

3.2.1. The TA, EC, WM, and FE may appoint one assistant, subject to ATM approval.

3.2.2. Assistants serve at the pleasure of their manager and the ATM.

3.2.3. Assistants may be removed from their position at any time by their manager or the ATM, with or without justification.

3.3. Visitor and Transfer

3.3.1. Controllers wishing to visit the vZHU ARTCC should fill out the appropriate application on the vZHU website.

3.3.2. Controllers wishing to transfer to the vZHU ARTCC from another ARTCC should do so through the VATUSA website.

3.3.3. The ATM reserved the right to deny or refuse any transfer or visiting controller request pursuant to the VATUSA Transfer and Visiting Controllers policy (DP002). All transfer and visiting requests are also subject to the VATSIM Transfer and Visiting Controllers policy.

3.3.4. Controllers must hold at least an S1 controller rating prior to applying for visiting status at vZHU.

3.3.5. Visiting controllers are qualified for the same controlling privileges as home controllers, pursuant to the GRP.

3.3.6. Visiting controllers with I1 or I3 instructor ratings shall log in as their previous non-Instructor rating (C1 or C3) while operating any position within vZHU.

3.3.7. Visiting controllers shall not log in with any rating they have not earned.

3.3.8. Visiting controllers will not be provided instruction for ratings or positions they are not certified for at their home ARTCC.

3.4. Activity Requirements

Any students or controllers who fail to meet the minimum requirements for any given month will be notified of inactivity in writing and given fourteen (14) days to respond. Failure to meet the activity requirements may result in removal from the facility roster. The ATM shall maintain records of all controller removed from the roster and their activity leading to their removal. These records shall be maintained for at least one (1) year.

3.4.1. Staff

Any person holding a staff position (ATM, DATM, TA, EC, FE, WM, and their assistants) shall complete at least five (5) hours of controlling or instruction time each calendar month, unless otherwise approved by the ATM. Staff members shall also maintain an active presence on Teamspeak. Staff members shall spend at least five (5) hours each week on Teamspeak, unless otherwise approved by the ATM. Staff who will be temporarily unavailable (vacations, personal obligations, etc.) shall notify the ATM ahead of the absence.

3.4.2. Home Controllers

3.4.2.1. Certified Controllers

Any home controller with at least one endorsement to control a major or minor facility within the ARTCC shall complete at least one (1) hour of controlling time each calendar month.

3.4.2.2. Uncertified Controllers

Any home controller who does not hold a S2 or greater, or an S1 without any endorsements to control within vZHU shall complete at least one (1) hour of training time with a mentor or instructor each calendar month.

3.4.3. Visiting Controllers

Any controller whose primary facility is not vZHU with at least one (1) endorsement to control a major or minor facility within the ARTCC shall complete at least one (1) hour of controlling time each calendar month.

3.4.4. Leave of Absence

Any vZHU member may request a leave of absence in writing. Requests should be sent to either the ATM or DATM, and should give an estimated length of leave and a brief reason. The reason need not reveal any confidential or private information. During their leave of absence, a member is relieved of all duties and/or responsibilities of their position and including the activity requirement until such time that they return to active status. The controller must notify the ATM or DATM in writing if they need to extend leave or return to active status. An LOA shall not exceed 6 months. Leave of absence status does not exempt the member from VATSIM minimum activity requirements or relieve them of automated inactivity deactivation from the network.

3.4.5. Reinstatement

Pursuant to GRP, any controller who is removed from the vZHU roster and returns to active status within six (6) months may return with all privileges and endorsements they have previously earned without any requirement to recertify. Controllers who return after six (6) month, but prior to twelve (12) months, may be required to recertify for their major airspace endorsements. Controllers who return after twelve (12) months have no automatic reinstatement of privileges and may be required to recertify prior to controlling.

3.5. Training Department

- 3.5.1. The vZHU TA shall manage and is responsible for the vZHU training department.
- 3.5.2. The vZHU TA shall staff the training department sufficiently to provide for the demands of the vZHU membership. Staffing levels shall be in accordance with guidance provided by the ATM and TD.
- 3.5.3. The vZHU TA shall appoint Instructors in accordance with VATUSA Procedures for Selection, Submission, and Appointment of Instructors (3120.311).
- 3.5.4. The training department shall provide training to all home members on the vZHU home roster.
- 3.5.5. The training department shall provide a mechanism for members and instructors to coordinate and schedule lessons.
- 3.5.6. The training department shall provide a mechanism for members to provide and receive feedback on each training session. Feedback to the student is required following every training session.
- 3.5.7. The training department shall provide training materials for members of vZHU for ratings and position training. The training department does not need to duplicate or replicate material provided by VATUSA, VATNA, or VATSIM.

3.6. Events Department

- 3.6.1. The vZHU EC shall manage the events department.
- 3.6.2. The vZHU EC shall submit events in accordance with the VATUSA Event Submission policy (DP003).
- 3.6.3. The events department shall develop and propose events to the ATM.
- 3.6.4. The events department shall develop events proposed by the ATM.
- 3.6.5. The events department shall coordinate events hosted by or including vZHU.
- 3.6.6. The events department have full authority over positions during a vZHU sponsored or supported event.
- 3.6.7. Controllers not signed up for an event in advance are encouraged to be available to control unfilled and relief positions.

4. Ratings and Endorsements

vZHU adopts the GRP as its governing ratings policy. Nothing vZHU policy or procedure may create or enforce restrictions in conflict with GRP.

4.1. Major Facility Endorsements

All VATSIM controllers must receive additional training and certification from the vZHU training department prior to working any Major Airport or Special Center as defined by GRP.

4.2. GRP Local Rules

4.2.1. Tower Trainee (S1) Endorsements

Pursuant to GRP, the S1 is the initial student rating is S1. An S1 rating without local endorsements does not imply authority to work any position. An S1 shall be endorsed for clearance delivery and/or ground control once they have been determined to be competent.

4.2.2. Designated Airspace Endorsements

- 4.2.2.1. The training department shall determine the competencies required in order to certify for a designated airspace endorsement.
- 4.2.2.2. Designated airspace within vZHU are defined by GRP.
 - George Bush Intercontinental Airport (KIAH) ATCT
 - Houston Approach (I90)
 - Houston Oceanic (ZHUO) Special Center
- 4.2.2.3. Houston Center shall not require an additional endorsement beyond the I90 TRACON endorsement.

5. Network

5.1. General

- 5.1.1. Controllers shall comply with facility procedures.
- 5.1.1.1. Controllers may deviate as required in order to accommodate workload. Any deviation shall be coordinated with affected controllers.
- 5.1.2. Controllers shall honor pilot requests contrary to flow or standard procedures. Requests for operations contrary to published flows shall be sequenced on a best-effort basis as not to delay other operations in compliance with current flow without penalizing the requestor.
- 5.1.3. Preferred routings are not required for normal operations.
- 5.1.4. Controllers are not responsible for non-movement areas.
- 5.1.5. Real-world facility hours may be observed at the controller's discretion. If a controller closes an underlying position, they are responsible for treating it as an uncontrolled field. If a pilot requests local services, best effort should be taken to provide requested services.
- 5.1.6. Controller coordination may occur by any mutually agreeable mechanism. Text chat, landline calls, and Teamspeak are all authorized at any time.

5.2. Opening Position

- 5.2.1. Controllers shall not sign on unless they are planning to control for at least 30 minutes.
- 5.2.2. Controllers shall receive a brief prior to priming up on a position, if applicable.
- 5.2.3. Controllers should log in to the Teamspeak server whenever practical while controlling online.

5.3. Closing Position

- 5.3.1. Controllers shall provide at least five (5) minutes notice prior to logging off whenever possible.
- 5.3.2. Controllers shall provide their notice by means of ATC chat and the *“.break”* (*[dot]break*) command.
- 5.3.3. Controllers shall brief their relief and/or overlying/underlying controllers prior to signing off. Briefs may be provided by any coordinated or approved communications method.

5.4. Controller Relief

- 5.4.1. Upon request and availability, a controller may be relieved of a position.
- 5.4.2. No controller may be ordered off of a position, unless so ordered by the ATM, DATM, a network supervisor, or event staff during an event.
- 5.4.3. Relief controllers shall receive a brief prior to taking active control of a position.
- 5.4.4. Controllers being relieved shall brief their relief controller.
- 5.4.5. Relief controllers shall use the same frequency and voice communications channel as the controller they are relieving.
- 5.4.6. Except during events, or when positions are being assigned by staff, positions are available on a first-come, first-served basis.
- 5.4.7. For radar positions, controllers being relieved shall transfer all radar tracks to the relief controller prior to logging off.

5.5. Pre-Departure Clearances

- 5.5.1. PDC operations are authorized at all controlled airfields in the vZHU airspace. PDC aliases may not be available for all airfields in vZHU.
- 5.5.2. Due to the additional complications introduced with PDCs, controllers are expected to request PDC training from the training staff prior to utilizing PDCs.

5.6. Departure Releases

All vZHU controllers shall comply with facility procedures regarding departure releases. If no departure release procedure is defined, local controllers shall coordinate with the overlying radar controllers, if online, to determine their departure release mechanism. Controllers shall prefer automatic releases when practical.

5.7. Rolling Calls

All vZHU controllers shall utilize a rolling call system at all vZHU towered airports. Rolling calls may be accomplished by coordination on the vZHU Teamspeak server, by network private chat, or by utilizing the "point-out" function. Any alternative mechanism coordinated between controllers is authorized.

5.8. ATC Voice Communications

- 5.8.1. Controllers shall provide voice ATC services when practical. Text-only controlling is authorized when a controller is unable to provide voice services.
- 5.8.2. Controllers shall use `rw.liveatc.net` as their voice server whenever practical.
- 5.8.3. Controllers shall use the primary callsign for their position as their voice channel (e.g. `HOU_38_CTR` when working combined center, even if using a combined or relief callsign).

5.9. Observing

- 5.9.1. Observers shall use `ZHU_XX_OBS` as their callsign, where `XX` is their assigned operating initials.
- 5.9.2. Staff members may use callsigns authorized by the VATUSA Division Policy (DP001).

5.10. Position Restrictions

- 5.10.1. Controllers may not work positions they are not certified or endorsed to work.
- 5.10.2. Designated Airspace (Major Airports) may require specific training and certifications beyond the basic competencies required by the GRP.

5.11. Position Splits

- 5.11.1. Position splits are authorized when warranted by traffic loads or during events. Position splits shall be executed in accordance with facility specific procedures. If no procedures exist, real-world splits or common-sense coordinated splits are authorized.
- 5.11.2. The ATM or DATM may authorize additional splits as required.
- 5.11.3. During events, the EC or Controller-In-Charge may authorize additional splits as required. Event splits may be determined by traffic load and may deviate from facility procedures unless otherwise prohibited.
- 5.11.4. Opening additional positions shall be preferred to splitting a position.

6. Official Services

6.1. Website

- 6.1.1. The vZHU website shall be considered a primary communications mechanism. All official communications or distributions sent by other means shall be made available by the website if practical.
- 6.1.2. The website and zhuartcc.org domain are property of vZHU.
- 6.1.3. The ATM shall be the custodian of the website and zhuartcc.org domain.

6.2. Teamspeak

- 6.2.1. vZHU utilizes a Teamspeak server for internal voice communications and coordination.
- 6.2.2. Access to vZHU's Teamspeak server is a privilege. Failure to comply with vZHU conduct policy may result in loss of Teamspeak privileges.
- 6.2.3. Member shall use their complete name (as registered with VATSIM) as their nickname on the Teamspeak server.
- 6.2.4. Controllers should log in to the Teamspeak server whenever practical when controlling online.
- 6.2.5. Controllers are encouraged to maintain a social presence on the Teamspeak server.

6.3. Email

- 6.3.1. Email shall be considered a primary communications mechanism.
- 6.3.2. vZHU staff members shall make available their VATSIM registered email address for official communications.
- 6.3.3. vZHU may issue individual email addresses to members with a demonstrated need.
- 6.3.4. vZHU staff shall retain official emails for a period of at least twelve (12) calendar months.
- 6.3.5. vZHU members shall keep their VATSIM registered email address current. Failure to do so may result in delays in communications. vZHU shall not be responsible for missed communications as a result of a member's failure to maintain their account.
- 6.3.6. Wide distribution announcements may be made via, but are not restricted to, VATUSA email broadcast services.

7. Conduct

- 7.1. vZHU members shall act with professionalism.
- 7.2. vZHU members will seek assistance before working positions for which they do not feel they competent to successfully work.
- 7.3. vZHU members shall be respectful and courteous of all members of the VATSIM network.
- 7.4. Controllers shall comply with the VATSIM Code of Conduct while on the VATSIM network or associated services, while using vZHU provided resources, while participating in vZHU activities, and while representing or associating with VATSIM or vZHU on social media or other outlets.
- 7.5. Failure to comply with conduct policies may result in disciplinary action, up to and including removal from the VATSIM network.

8. References

8.1. VATSIM

- 8.1.1. [Code of Conduct](#)
- 8.1.2. [Global Ratings Policy](#)
- 8.1.3. [Transfer and Visiting Controller Policy](#)

8.2. VATUSA

- 8.2.1. [VATUSA Division Policy \(DP001\)](#)
- 8.2.2. [Event Submission Policy \(DP003\)](#)
- 8.2.3. [Procedures for Selection, Submission, and Appointment of Instructors \(3120.311\)](#)
- 8.2.4. [Transferring and Visiting Controllers Policy \(DP002\)](#)

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