KU Research Procedures for Purchase and Use of Unmanned Arial Systems (UASs) or Drones for Research Purposes

Purchase of UASs/Drones for Research Purposes

Purpose: Individuals seeking to purchase UASs or drones for research purposes must seek prior approval for the purchase of the unit(s) from the KU Airworthiness Committee. The purchase of aeronautic components to make major modifications to existing UAS or drone airframes for research purposes must also obtain prior approval by the KU Airworthiness Committee. The purchase of components for the repair and routine maintenance of existing UASs or drones for research purposes does not require prior approval.

Procedure for obtaining approval for purchase of research UASs or drones and for substantial modification of existing airframes:

1) The researcher seeking permission for purchase of a drone or UAS will send a) a one or two page request for purchase including a description of the experimental protocol for the research study (this document should describe anticipated flight usage) and b) a detailed technical description of the unit or components being purchased to the Director of Research Compliance in the KU Office of Research. After logging the purchase request in the drone/AUS purchase database, the Director of Research Compliance will forward the request and accompanying documents to the chair of the KU Airworthiness Committee.

2) A subset of two members of the Airworthiness Committee assigned by the committee chair will evaluate the request for purchase and either approve the purchase, or return the request to the researcher with comments and questions for clarification. This evaluation will be completed within three business days.

3) Once the purchase is approved, the Committee will inform the Director of Research Compliance, who will issue a notice of approval for purchase. This notice will be attached to the purchase requisition.

4) Following the issuance of the notice of approval for purchase, substantial modifications to the specifications of the UASs or drones, or components intended for purchase should be routed to the Airworthiness Committee for further consideration.

5) Following receipt of the drone or UAS, the purchasers should contact the COA application coordinator (Kevin Teel), in the KU Office of Research, to add the new unit to KU insurance. The COA Application Coordinator (Kevin Teel) will contact the Risk Management Director (Michael Rosenberg) to add the drone or UAS to KU Insurance.
Use of UASs or drones, or substantially modified airframes in research

Purpose:
UASs or drones used in research must be conducted in accordance with FAA regulations governing the use of these airframes. In order to operate such vehicles for research purposes, KU programs must demonstrate appropriate training and qualification for operators, must operate under an FAA approved Certificate of Authorization (COA) or must be covered by an FAA Section 333 exemption, and must satisfy any export controls compliance associated with the project.

Procedure for obtaining approval for operation of UASs or drones, or substantially modified airframes in research:
1) Unless the airframe already has a Section 333 exemption, the key components of a COA application must be completed in cooperation with the Office of Research COA Application Coordinator (Kevin Teel) for the specific airframe and operational area and submit this application. This information, including a brief (two-page or less) description of the project must be submitted to the Research Integrity Officer in the KU Office of Research. The Research Integrity Officer will log this airworthiness request and then pass the application along to the KU Airworthiness Committee. The Airworthiness committee will evaluate the airframe and research plan, and notify the Research Integrity Officer following approval of the plan. The Research Integrity Office will submit an airworthiness certification to the Vice Chancellor for Research for signature. The letter of approval will be provided to the COA Application Coordinator and a copy to the researcher. The researcher will attach the airworthiness statement to the COA draft. The researcher will notify the COA Application Coordinator when the COA draft is ready to be submitted. The COA Application Coordinator will then submit the COA draft to the FAA for approval.
2) For projects involving non-citizen airframe operators or the shipment of airframes or airframe parts outside of the U.S., the researcher must consult the KU Export Controls officer to develop a compliance plan.

Contact for Drones for Research Purposes:
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