

Slot Utilization, Monitoring and On-Time Performance

Determining Historic Precedence

Introduction

Airport slot coordination relies on clearly defined and consistently applied principles to ensure the fair, transparent, and non-discriminatory allocation of constrained airport capacity.

This paper clarifies the distinct roles of slot utilization, slot monitoring, and On-Time Performance (OTP), in the context of determining historic precedence under the Worldwide Airport Slot Guidelines (WASG). These concepts serve different purposes and should not be used interchangeably.

Slot utilization determines whether a slot series qualifies for historic precedence. Slot monitoring provides a structured process for identifying and investigating potential misuse of slots. OTP is an operational performance indicator that may provide useful contextual information but does not, in itself, determine whether a slot has been properly utilized or whether misuse has occurred.

Maintaining this distinction is essential to ensure consistent application of the WASG, preserve due process, and avoid the misinterpretation of operational performance as a proxy for slot utilization or historic eligibility.

Core Principles

The roles of utilization, monitoring and OTP can be distinguished by the questions they are intended to answer:

Slot utilization: Has the allocated slot series been operated sufficiently to qualify for historic precedence?

Utilization is determined in accordance with the WASG 80:20 rule and is the mechanism for determining eligibility for historic rights.

Slot monitoring: Is there evidence that slot use requires further review or investigation?

Monitoring is a structured process undertaken by coordinators at Level 3 airports, to assess patterns of slot use, identify potential misuse and, where appropriate, engage with airlines to understand operational circumstances before reaching conclusions. Monitoring therefore involves analysis, dialogue and investigation, rather than reliance on a single performance indicator.

This process also allows intent to be assessed over time. What is not initially considered intentional misuse may become intentional misuse, if the airline or other aircraft operator fails to take effective corrective action following correspondence with the coordinator during the season.

Only where a review process has been completed and intentional or repeated slot misuse has been determined should enforcement measures be considered.

Intentional misuse may then be addressed via enforcement measures, as set out in WASG Chapter 9, which are intended to address deliberate or systematic slot misuse through proportionate, transparent enforcement measures. These include the adjustment of priority and withdrawal of historic rights, following due process.

OTP: How closely did an operation occur to its scheduled time?

OTP is an operational performance measure that reflects the difference between scheduled and actual operations. It may be influenced by a wide range of factors across the airport, airspace and airline operating environment, many of which are outside the control of the airline concerned. OTP outcomes are therefore influenced not only by airline performance, but also by the ability of airports, air navigation service providers and other stakeholders to deliver the capacity that has been allocated.

OTP can help highlight underlying operational issues which may warrant separate performance improvement actions, depending on the nature and causes of the issue identified. OTP does not measure slot utilization, establish slot misuse, or determine historic precedence.

Risks of Conflating Functions

Blurring the distinction between slot utilization, slot monitoring and OTP creates significant risks for the integrity of the slot allocation system. These risks arise because each metric serves a different purpose, and success under one measure does not necessarily indicate compliance or performance under the others.

- A flight can have high slot utilization but not high OTP.
- A flight can have high OTP and still fail utilization because it was cancelled below the usage threshold.
- A service can repeatedly operate with a different aircraft type (triggering slot monitoring) while still achieving high OTP and utilization.

Using OTP as a proxy for slot utilization risks penalizing airlines for operational outcomes that may be driven by factors outside their control, including airport constraints, air traffic management restrictions, stand unavailability, runway closures, reactionary delays, weather conditions, wider network disruption, inaccurate or insufficiently robust airport capacity declarations.

Using OTP as a substitute for slot monitoring risks bypassing the structured processes of analysis,

dialogue and investigation and due process established under WASG Chapter 9. Poor OTP alone cannot demonstrate whether slot misuse has occurred, nor can it distinguish between airline-driven and system-driven causes of operational delay. Accordingly, OTP itself cannot justify the withdrawal of historic slot rights.

Conflating OTP with utilization or monitoring also risks shifting attention away from the root causes of poor operational performance. Where OTP indicates recurring operational challenges, the appropriate response is to investigate and address those constraints, rather than treat OTP itself as evidence of misuse.

Finally, departing from established slot allocation and monitoring principles in this manner also carries broader systemic consequences. Inconsistent use of OTP in slot regulation risks creating divergence between jurisdictions, undermining predictability, legal certainty and the globally harmonized principles underpinning the WASG.

OTP may therefore be used as an operational indicator to support trend analysis and inform monitoring activities. However, it must not be used as a standalone criterion for determining historic precedence, and OTP, in and of itself, cannot justify the withdrawal of historic rights. Any concerns identified through monitoring should be assessed through the investigation and due process mechanisms established under the WASG.

Contact IATA for more information:

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Unrestricted

IATA Position

- IATA supports effective slot monitoring and the efficient use of constrained airport capacity. However, the roles of utilization, monitoring and OTP must remain clearly separated.
- Slot utilization must be determined in accordance with the WASG 80:20 rule.
- Slot monitoring must be conducted through the structured assessment, investigation, engagement and enforcement processes described in WASG Chapter 9.
- Airlines should be provided with an opportunity to explain operational circumstances and submit supporting evidence before conclusions regarding potential slot misuse are reached.
- OTP may be used as operational information to inform monitoring activities and identify areas requiring further review.
- OTP must not be used as a direct determinant of historic eligibility, as a proxy for slot utilization, or as justification for the withdrawal of historic rights.
- OTP must not replace the established monitoring, investigation and due process mechanisms provided within the WASG.

Maintaining this distinction is essential to:

- Preserve predictability, transparency and legal certainty for all stakeholders.
- Ensure fair and non-discriminatory slot allocation.
- Focus performance improvement efforts on the underlying causes of operational inefficiency.
- Maintain alignment with globally recognised best practice in airport slot coordination.

In summary:

- Utilization is the key determinant of whether historic rights are retained.
- Monitoring determines whether slot use requires investigation.
- OTP measures operational performance.

These functions are complementary but not interchangeable. While OTP may provide useful operational context, it does not determine slot historic precedence, and questions of potential misuse must be assessed through the monitoring processes established in the WASG.

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