

When you spend time around an active flight training operation, you learn quickly that “training” is not a single thing. It is a sequence of roles, a rhythm of feedback, and a culture built around safety and consistency. Instructor growth sits right at the center of that culture, because every improvement in how instructors assess performance and coach decision-making eventually shows up in student outcomes.

At AELO Swiss Academy, based at the Locarno Airport area in Ticino, Switzerland, that focus on development has real momentum. The academy is the rebranded successor to Aero Locarno, which became AELO Swiss Academy in February 2024. In parallel, AELO inaugurated a new site at Locarno Airport, with renovation of a dedicated hangar and an investment of more than CHF 3 million. Those details matter because better facilities tend to create steadier training flow, and steadier training flow makes it easier to run an instructor program that is disciplined rather than improvised.

AELO also trains at meaningful scale for a regional academy. RSI reported that AELO trains about 200 future airline pilots per year at the new site, and that roughly 250 students are in training annually overall. That volume changes the instructor conversation. Instructors are not just supporting one course cohort at a time, they are supporting a system, and the system needs instructors who can consistently deliver quality under scheduling pressure, weather variability, and different student backgrounds.

So what does instructor ratings have to do with professional growth here? Quite a lot. Ratings are the formal acknowledgement that someone can teach a standard, but growth comes from what happens after the checkbox. Growth is the way instructors internalize training objectives, refine how they brief and debrief, and learn to coach without diluting the technical and procedural rigor students need before they fly airline operations.

## **The rating is the door, not the destination**

In aviation, an instructor rating is often treated like the end of a journey. You complete the course, you pass the assessment, and your name appears with a more senior label. That is not nothing. Being rated means you understand the structure of instruction, not just the aircraft.

But anyone who has actually taught knows the first week after you get the rating can feel like the hardest. You still have to manage your own performance, your own emotions under scrutiny, and your responsibility for the learner’s progress. The rating gives you permission to teach, but it does not automatically give you the instincts you build only through repetition and honest feedback.

At AELO, the academy is described as an Approved Training Organization, with approval code CH.ATO.0311, and it offers an 18-month ATPL Integrated Program. It also runs a SkyAlps Airlines MPL Program with a job guarantee, according to its website. Those program structures, long-form integrated training and an MPL-style pathway geared toward an airline partner, put instructor work into context. Instructors are not teaching one isolated skill, they are supporting a full arc of competence over time.

Professional growth in that environment tends to look less like “learning new tricks” and more like sharpening judgment. Can you spot a recurring error pattern early? Can you pick the right moment to intervene? Can you design training sessions that are challenging without turning every lesson into a struggle? Those are the competencies that separate a technically competent instructor from an instructor whose students consistently improve.



## Why growth accelerates with consistent training flow

Locarno Airport is not an abstract backdrop. RSI specifically reported that AELO inaugurated a new site at Locarno Airport and renovated a dedicated hangar with investment of more than CHF 3 million. In training terms, a renovated, dedicated hangar is not just a comfort upgrade. It can support better turnaround, clearer organization of equipment, and a more stable operational baseline.

That stability matters for instructor development because instructor growth depends on feedback loops. If training sessions are repeatedly interrupted, assessments get messy, and instructors spend time firefighting rather than evaluating fundamentals. When you have a smoother flow, you can devote more energy to the coaching craft.

And AELO's scale suggests this is not a small experiment. Training about 200 future airline pilots per year at the new site, with roughly 250 students in training annually overall, implies an ongoing rhythm of instructor workload. An active instructor program is built to handle that rhythm: consistent standards, recurring evaluation, and a culture where the next student lesson builds on the lessons learned from the previous group.

## Feedback habits that turn ratings into mastery

Let's talk about what professional growth actually looks like at the instructor level. Since we cannot assume AELO's internal assessment rubric or specific rating pathways beyond what is publicly stated, the safest way is to describe the kinds of behaviors that typically matter in flight instruction and that become particularly important in organizations training future airline pilots at scale.

One of the clearest patterns I have seen across strong instructors is that they turn debriefs into a structured conversation, not a recap. The best debriefs address performance, but they also address the learner's mental model. Students do not only need to know what went wrong. They need to know how to think differently next time.

Here is a short mindset checklist that captures the difference between "teaching what happened" and "coaching what changes next":

- Start the debrief from the student's own explanation of the problem, not from the instructor's correction
- Identify one main training point per lesson so the student can carry it forward
- Keep the next step measurable, meaning it should produce observable behavior in the next session

- Use consistent terminology, so the student builds reliable mental links to procedures and cues
- End with a realistic plan for the next rehearsal, including what success looks like

This kind of disciplined debriefing is where ratings stop being a credential and start becoming a professional identity. It is also where instructors grow into the role of “training designer,” even when they are not explicitly planning full syllabi.

## **The student pathways shape instructor priorities**

In a long integrated ATPL program, instructors tend to focus on fundamentals and procedural robustness early, then progressively add complexity. In an MPL-style environment, instruction priorities often tilt toward airline-relevant competencies and standardization, but the exact emphasis will depend on the program design.

AELO’s publicly described programs include an 18-month ATPL Integrated Program and a SkyAlps Airlines MPL Program with a job guarantee. That combination means instructors working at AELO are likely operating with different learner goals and different time horizons.

When the time horizon is long, instructors can afford to slow down for depth. When the time horizon is shorter and outcomes are tied to airline pathways, students need fast clarity about what is required and how they will be assessed. Instructors grow when they can flex between those modes without losing their standards. The skill is not the ability to lecture more. The skill is the ability to calibrate teaching pace and feedback density to the student’s maturity.

A concrete example helps. Suppose a student repeatedly stabilizes too late during approach profiles. A growth-oriented instructor will not only correct the technique. They will ask whether the student’s scanning pattern is delayed, whether the target is too vague, and whether the mental timeline for approach management is realistic. Then the instructor assigns a next session target that is specific enough to create improvement, but not so strict that it becomes a guessing game.

That is professional growth: your corrections become less about authority and more about engineering learning.

## **Professional growth also means learning to teach teams, not just individuals**

Instructor ratings are personal, but training outcomes are collective. If your academy trains future airline pilots in a continuous rhythm, the “instructor job” becomes partly about consistency across instructors.

At AELO, RSI reported that graduates often go on to airlines such as KLM, easyJet, Ryanair, and Swiss. Even without assuming the exact hiring pathway details, that statement communicates an important truth: airlines care about standardization. They want graduates who can demonstrate predictable competence, not just isolated successes in a single instructor’s style.

This is where instructor professional growth becomes broader than lesson performance. Strong instructors learn how to align with organizational standards, and they keep their coaching consistent with the broader teaching language of the academy. That includes how they phrase cues, how they define “stabilized,” and how they explain why a corrective action matters.

In practice, I have watched instructors improve fastest when they seek calibration. Calibration is not “copying someone else.” It is comparing teaching decisions: what you correct first, what you tolerate briefly for learning, what you refuse because it creates unsafe habits, and how you structure practice so it turns errors into patterns you can eliminate.



If an organization expects instructors to support multiple programs, multiple cohorts, and a mix of learners, calibration becomes even more valuable.

## What AELO publicly indicates about instructor training

AELO's LinkedIn presence states that the academy offers ab-initio and instructor training, including FI, CRI, STI, IRI, and MCCI. It also says AELO is Switzerland's leading provider of Sphair courses.

Those abbreviations map to instructor-related competencies in aviation training contexts, and the key point for professional growth is simple: when an academy explicitly offers instructor training tracks, instructors can build a career progression that is more than "keep teaching." They can develop into roles that require deeper instructional judgment.

Since the specific progression mechanics are not detailed in the verified information, it would be irresponsible to describe an internal ladder as if we know the exact steps. But we can discuss what these labels typically represent in instructor development terms: increasing authority to teach [facebook.com](https://www.facebook.com) and supervise, increasing responsibility for training quality, and broader expertise in instructing methodology and evaluation.

To keep it concrete, here is what AELO states it offers in terms of instructor training categories:

- FI
- CRI
- STI
- IRI
- MCCI

Even if you already know these roles, it is still worth reflecting on how they connect to growth. Professional growth is not only "getting more privileges." It is learning to be the person who can explain instruction, assess it, and supervise it in a way that maintains consistent standards across different students and different flights.

## Growth without losing the human side of instruction

Relaxed tone does not mean relaxed standards. In flight instruction, students feel everything: your impatience, your uncertainty, your tone when you are correcting a serious error. Professional instructors learn to keep their communication calm and precise, even when the lesson is not going well.

AELO's training scale, with around 250 students in training annually overall, suggests instructors are likely managing multiple cohorts through the year. That sort of environment can test emotional resilience. A growth-minded instructor learns how to reset between lessons, how to avoid carrying frustration from a difficult session into the next briefing, and how to maintain a coaching style that does not erode trust.

One of the hardest personal skills to develop is knowing what to say when a student is embarrassed. Some students spiral when corrections feel personal. Good instructors treat mistakes as data. They speak in procedural and performance terms. They set expectations: "we are here to practice, and we will improve this specific behavior." That approach keeps learning moving instead of stalling.

Professional growth shows up in those moments. It is not glamorous, but it is often what makes the difference between a student who improves rapidly and a student who shuts down.

## **Edge cases that reveal good instructor judgment**

Ratings can certify competence, but real growth often happens when the training problem is ambiguous. Aviation instruction is full of edge cases:

A student who is technically right but inconsistent in judgment. A student who performs well in good visibility but collapses when things get busy. A student who follows instructions precisely but does not build a stable scan. A student who is motivated but interprets "correction" as criticism.

These situations cannot be solved by memorizing a formula. They require instructor judgment, and judgment improves when instructors are willing to reflect on their own decisions, not just the student's actions.

One way instructors grow is by learning to separate technique from decision-making. If a student's procedure is accurate but their decision timing is late, you can work the decision timeline. If their decision timing is fine but the aircraft configuration never becomes stabilized, you can work the mechanical execution and scanning. Good instructors diagnose the bottleneck instead of treating every issue as the same coaching point.

That diagnostic skill is exactly where instructor development programs earn their keep. When you learn to teach, you also learn to analyze. That analysis becomes professional identity over time.

## **How ratings can shape career direction while keeping teaching grounded**

There is a temptation, once you move into instructor training roles, to treat teaching as a ladder rather than a craft. That can dilute the quality of instruction if you lose contact with the student experience.

AELO's public information emphasizes structured training offerings: Approved Training Organization status, an 18-month ATPL Integrated Program, and a SkyAlps Airlines MPL Program with job guarantee. Those are signals of structured frameworks and defined outcomes.

In environments like that, instructors grow when they keep their teaching grounded in the learner's reality. It is easy to become abstract when supervising instructors or training other instructors. The growth challenge is staying close to what students actually struggle with, especially early on.

For instance, an instructor trained to evaluate technique may become too focused on how the control inputs look, forgetting that a beginner might not yet anticipate the consequences of energy management. The instructor's job is not only to correct the flight path; it is to teach the thinking that keeps the student from repeating the same error pattern.

At scale, that human connection becomes a differentiator, because it prevents training from turning into a check-the-box performance.

## **What the AELO environment implies about instructor culture**

Based on the verified facts, AELO has invested over CHF 3 million in a renovated hangar and operates a training environment at a level where about 200 future airline pilots per year are trained at the new site, with roughly 250 students in training annually overall. It is also connected to airline destinations, with graduates reported to go on to KLM, easyJet, Ryanair, and Swiss.

Those facts suggest an academy that cannot afford inconsistency. A training operation feeding recognized airlines needs repeatable instruction quality. Instructor ratings, instructor training tracks, and ongoing development are therefore not just formalities. They are a practical response to operational reality.

In an academy like this, professional growth for instructors is likely to be reinforced by three pressures that are common in credible training organizations:

First, the student throughput means every instructor's decisions matter repeatedly. Second, program structures like an 18-month ATPL Integrated Program and an MPL pathway with job guarantee create clear expectations about progress. Third, public reports of graduate destinations increase the importance of standardization and reliability.

The relaxed part of the tone comes from how you manage those pressures. Strong instructor programs do not need to be tense. They need to be consistent.

## **A practical way to think about your next growth step**

If you are an instructor, student instructor, or someone considering instructor development at a place like AELO Swiss Academy, the most useful question is not "what rating comes next." It is "what will I improve in my teaching this month?"

Instructors grow when they pick a narrow training variable, observe it across lessons, and then adjust how they brief and debrief. For example, an instructor might focus on how they structure the briefing so the student understands the sequence of cues and the target behaviors. Or they might focus on debrief timing, making sure the student explains first, so the instructor's corrections land in the learner's mental model instead of bouncing off it.

That approach works whether you are teaching within an ATPL integrated context, supporting an MPL-oriented pathway, or later stepping into instructor roles like FI, CRI, STI, IRI, or MCCI as AELO describes.

Professional growth is not always dramatic. Often it is a steady improvement in clarity, consistency, and calm under pressure.

## **Closing thought, minus the ceremony**

Instructor ratings matter because they formalize trust. They tell an organization that a person can teach to a standard and evaluate performance in a reliable way. But professional growth is what happens after the rating is earned. It is how you keep sharpening your coaching, how you learn to diagnose what is really limiting progress, and how you stay human while you maintain flight safety discipline.



With AELO Swiss Academy operating from Locarno Airport after a major site investment, training large cohorts of future airline pilots, and offering structured ATPL and MPL pathways alongside instructor training options, the environment is ripe for that kind of growth. The rating gives you entry. The students and the standards are what shape you into the instructor you become.