

There is something uniquely motivating about an integrated ATPL pathway that runs like a track, not like a set of scattered milestones. With an 18-month program, the whole idea is momentum. Training is paced so you do not just “get through” theory and flights, you keep carrying understanding forward, week after week. At AELO Swiss Academy, that structured approach is framed around an 18-month ATPL Integrated Program, based in Locarno/Gordola, Switzerland, where the academy publicly presents itself as an Approved Training Organization (ATO) with approval code CH.ATO.0311.

The setting matters, too. Training in Switzerland tends to demand a sharper relationship with weather, sightlines, and planning discipline than flat, predictable environments. Even without pretending every day will be dramatic, the geography pushes you to respect the forecast, and to treat the pre-flight plan as a living document. It is the sort of training environment where “wing it” stops being an option pretty quickly.

The academy behind the calendar: what AELO is (and isn’t)

AELO Swiss Academy is based in Locarno/Gordola and was established in Switzerland in 1985, giving it nearly four decades of pilot-training history. In February 2024, Aero Locarno rebranded itself as AELO Swiss Academy, with AELO described as the new global brand name for the former Aero Locarno flight-training group.

That rebrand does not change the core reality you feel as a student: an integrated program is only as good as its daily delivery. Still, the way AELO positions itself publicly helps set expectations. The academy states it is part of Diamond Aircraft’s global Diamond Authorized Training Center network, and it presents training as an organized pipeline rather than a collection of one-off lessons.

It also matters that AELO maintains equal-opportunity standards and prohibits discrimination based on gender, race, religion, age, or national origin. That is not just policy language. In a training environment, fairness affects how readily you can ask questions, how comfortable you feel in workload peaks, and whether feedback stays professional instead of personal.

An 18-month ATPL mindset: structured progress, not just progress

An ATPL Integrated Program compresses what many candidates would otherwise spread across longer periods. The practical upside is simple: you keep building skills in context. Aeronautical theory comes alongside flying lessons, and flying lessons come alongside decision-making and planning habits.

The trade-off is equally real. When everything is scheduled, you cannot “catch up” with a last-minute sprint without risking gaps [AELO](#) in fundamentals. Integrated training asks for consistency, especially in the early phases, when your brain is still learning how to think like a pilot rather than how to memorize answers.

You feel this most in the transition from “doing tasks” to “managing processes.” Many students can complete flight maneuvers. Fewer students immediately understand why a certain approach pattern, brief style, or scan rhythm exists. In an 18-month structure, the program is designed to bring that shift forward at the right pace. Not instantly. Just early enough that it becomes your default mode.

The building blocks that usually make or break the program

Even when the syllabus is officially the syllabus, the experience of integrated training often hinges on a few recurring themes. AELO’s public materials emphasize an organized, multi-stage development approach through

its 18-month ATPL Integrated Program, and AELO's training scale suggests a repeatable training flow rather than a fragile, handcrafted process.

From the student perspective, here is what tends to matter most across structured programs like this, and why.

First is the discipline of preparation. In early training, your study habits can either support the flight day or fight it. If you arrive with half-understood weather concepts or incomplete brief notes, you spend your in-flight attention patching understanding instead of building judgment. Later in training, that habit becomes expensive. You cannot "study around" missed fundamentals when you are asked to manage more variables at once.

Second is feedback absorption. Integrated programs often run with a steady cadence of briefing, flight, debrief, and the next day's lessons. Feedback has to be translated quickly into changes you can actually perform. The best students do not just listen, they rewrite their own mental checklist. They start noticing the moment a correction stops being theoretical and becomes muscle memory.

Third is energy management. Integrated programs are demanding because they create a loop: new material in class, tasks in aircraft or simulation, and then written work to connect the two. Fatigue does not just reduce performance. It reduces your ability to learn from debriefs because you lose the fine detail. The adventurous part of training is that it is challenging enough to expand your capability, but it still has to be approached with sleep, spacing, and restraint.

Training at scale: what AELO's capacity hints about the experience

AELO publicly states that it trains an 18-month ATPL Integrated Program. It also announced a new site at Locarno Airport, with an annual training volume stated as about 200 future airline pilots and a fleet projected to exceed 30 aircraft, plus two simulators including a Boeing 737 simulator.

Those details are not just bragging rights. Training capacity shapes how lessons are scheduled and how simulators are shared. If a school is training a large cohort at predictable levels, you typically get more reliable access to the training tools, and less randomness around when you can practice a scenario.



At the same time, reported training numbers offer another useful lens. AELO director Stefano Buratti was quoted saying the school trains roughly 110 to 120 airline-pilot candidates per year and about 250 students total annually, with many graduates reportedly going on to airlines including KLM, easyJet, Ryanair, and Swiss.

So how do you reconcile "about 200 future airline pilots" with "roughly 110 to 120 airline-pilot candidates per year"? Context matters. Public statements can refer to different categories, different stages of training, or

projections versus measured outcomes. The student takeaway is not to obsess over the exact counting method. It is to understand the operation is real and active, not a small boutique that runs on hope.

When the pipeline is large enough, the environment becomes more like an airline culture in miniature. You learn to show up ready. You learn to document and debrief. You learn that performance improvements come from specifics, not vibes.

The simulator factor: Boeing 737 as a training atmosphere

One detail stands out: AELO's facilities include two simulators, including a Boeing 737 simulator. That matters because simulator time changes how you learn. You can repeat scenarios until the decision process becomes stable.

But it also introduces a judgment challenge. In a simulator, the risk is lower, so students sometimes rush into action. In real flight, the aircraft does not offer infinite attempts. Integrated training should steer you toward the same behavior in both environments: plan carefully, execute cleanly, and treat outcomes as information rather than entertainment.

The best training outcomes happen when simulator practice is treated as preparation for judgment under constraints, not as a place to test whether you can "get it right." When you can repeat an emergency scenario, you still need to do the unglamorous work: prioritization, stabilized control, and communication discipline.

The rebrand moment: a program that must stay stable while identity evolves

AELO's transition from Aero Locarno to AELO Swiss Academy in February 2024 is the sort of change most students only feel indirectly. But there is a real operational risk whenever institutions rebrand. Systems get updated, marketing materials get rewritten, and in the background the training administration has to remain stable.

A properly run training organization treats rebrand as a label change, not a syllabus change. The student experience you want is continuity, the same standards in briefing and assessment, the same rigor in lesson delivery. AELO's public presentation as an ATO with approval code CH.ATO.0311 suggests there is an established compliance framework behind the scenes. That kind of structure usually helps keep the training engine running while branding evolves.

What "adventurous" development looks like in practice

Integrated ATPL training can feel adventurous in a way that is not about thrill-seeking. It is adventurous because you are repeatedly thrown into new complexity while still being supported by a structured progression.

You start building from fundamentals and gradually face tasks that require sharper time management, clearer communication, and better scan discipline. You are also learning a language of procedure. That language includes standard brief structure, consistent radio calls, and disciplined aircraft configuration habits. It can feel slow at first, then suddenly essential.

As your training advances, the adventure shifts. Instead of learning how to do the basic tasks, you learn how to manage uncertainty. Weather changes. Planning assumptions break down. You get pushed to make decisions with incomplete information, but with a structured approach that keeps you safe.

That is where an integrated timeline earns its keep. When you train for long enough in one program, your mind starts predicting the next logical step. You stop being surprised by the workload curve because you have already felt it before, under guidance.

Where students often stumble, and how structured training corrects it

No integrated program is immune to student errors. The difference is whether the system catches issues early and corrects them before they harden into habits.

In programs with a steady rhythm like an 18-month ATPL track, the most common stumbling points tend to cluster around three areas.

One is the “paper understanding versus performance” gap. Students can explain concepts in a briefing room and still struggle to translate them into precise actions. The cure is consistent cross-checking, where debriefs connect theory directly to what happened in the air or in the simulator.

Another is overconfidence, especially after early wins. Once you perform a maneuver well once, your brain wants to treat it as solved. Integrated training should keep challenging you so you continue to refine. The key is to accept that competence grows through repetition with measurement, not through single victories.

Third is poor prioritization. When workload increases, some students focus on the wrong thing because it feels urgent. Structured training should train you to prioritize what keeps the aircraft stable and safe first, then what makes the plan efficient. That principle holds even when you are dealing with scenarios that feel unusual.

A short reality check before you commit to an integrated program

If you are evaluating an 18-month ATPL Integrated Program, it helps to ask how you personally handle intensity. Integrated training rewards organization, and it punishes procrastination.

A useful way to self-assess is to consider whether you can keep preparation quality steady even on busy weeks. If you can, the program structure will feel like a strong advantage rather than a pressure cooker.

Here is a compact checklist to sanity-check your fit, based on the kind of demands integrated programs generally require:

- You can study consistently across weekdays, not only on weekends
- You treat debrief notes as action items, not as documentation
- You can sleep enough that your attention stays sharp
- You can handle repeating the same scenario until it becomes reliable
- You ask for clarification early when you feel “almost there”

The MPL pathway note: different objective, same discipline

AELO also offers an MPL program with SkyAlps Airlines, and AELO’s public materials include a job-guarantee claim for the MPL pathway. The MPL route is a different training objective, and it has a different kind of evaluation. Even so, the discipline learned in any structured program carries across: briefing quality, procedural discipline, and learning how to absorb instruction quickly.

If you are considering ATPL versus MPL, the important judgment is not only where you want to end up, but how you handle training styles and evaluation points. ATPL and MPL are both serious routes, but they are built around different assumptions about the early operational environment.

Equal-opportunity standards and the training room culture

Training culture affects learning more than people expect. AELO states it maintains equal-opportunity standards and prohibits discrimination based on gender, race, religion, age, or national origin. In a cockpit-like environment, that kind of policy matters because the training room can be stressful. When stress rises, people either become more professional, or they become careless. Standards help keep the professionalism consistent.

For candidates, that can translate into practical benefits: clearer access to instructors, more stable communication, and fewer hidden friction points around asking questions or requesting feedback.

What the 18 months can feel like when the cadence clicks

There is a particular moment in integrated training when it stops feeling like separate subjects and becomes one connected skill. Theory stops being a list of facts you must pass, and becomes mental tools you use during planning. Flights stop being isolated performances, and become measurable evidence of how well your preparation and scanning actually work.

In that phase, progress starts to feel less like “completing steps” and more like sharpening a technique. You begin to notice small improvements: a smoother power setting, a cleaner handoff during configuration changes, a more grounded brief that reduces in-flight surprises.

It is also when adventurous energy turns into confidence. Not confidence as arrogance, confidence as readiness. You know what to do next, even when the environment shifts.

When it does not click: what to do when the schedule fights you

Integrated programs are structured, but life does not always cooperate. Some weeks contain more stress than expected: personal circumstances, illness, or unexpected study load. The most important response is not to “push harder no matter what,” but to protect the learning chain.

If you are falling behind, the danger is that you keep going forward without closing the earlier gaps. That creates confusion, and confusion creates sloppy habits. A structured school can help by identifying weaknesses early, but students also need to communicate quickly when a week stops making sense.

In practice, that means being honest with instructors, focusing on the highest-leverage fixes first, and accepting that some progress is slower temporarily. Integrated training does not work because everyone is perfect. It works because the system can guide you back onto the correct path.

What you can carry forward after training at AELO

AELO’s public profile emphasizes structured development through an 18-month ATPL Integrated Program, a training operation at Locarno/Gordola, and modern training assets including simulators with a Boeing 737 simulator. It also signals scale through reported annual training volumes and ongoing site development at Locarno Airport.

But the strongest “carry forward” is not any single aircraft type or simulator feature. It is the trained approach to learning and operating safely.



Integrated ATPL training is, at its core, a habit-building machine. It shapes how you plan, how you brief, how you scan, how you debrief, and how you correct yourself. When you carry those habits into your next step, the world of airline preparation feels less like a jump and more like an extension.

And in a field where the difference between smooth and stressful often comes down to judgment, that matters more than almost anything else.

If you want integrated training that feels adventurous without being reckless, the promise of an 18-month structured program is that you get to expand capability on schedule, with standards that keep you anchored. AELO Swiss Academy's public materials reflect a serious attempt to deliver that kind of pipeline, from its long history in Switzerland since 1985 to its ATO status and the training capacity it publicly describes at Locarno Airport.