

Proposal to Pilot a Saudia Cadet Applicant Mentorship Program

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Outline

Topic A six-month pilot of the Saudia Cadet Readiness Mentorship Program (SCRMP), a structured online mentoring and preparation program for prospective Saudi cadet applicants.

Driving Question How can Saudia improve applicant preparation before formal selection while controlling staff workload, protecting recruitment integrity, and building a stronger pipeline of qualified Saudi pilots?

Primary Audience Saudia executives in Pilot Recruitment, Flight Operations Training, Talent Acquisition, and Human Resources who can authorize a limited pilot program and assign internal mentors.

Secondary Stakeholders Current Saudia pilots and recruiters who would serve as mentors or subject-matter experts; Saudi aviation students, particularly those studying abroad; GACA-related licensing and workforce stakeholders.

Proposition Approve a 24-week, 40-participant pilot that combines standardized readiness modules, eight trained mentors, four live workshops, individual readiness plans, and quantitative evaluation before any larger rollout.

Guiding Research Questions

- Where do otherwise promising applicants experience uncertainty before they submit an application?
- Which competencies can mentorship improve without replacing formal flight training or revealing proprietary selection content?
- How can Saudia standardize mentor guidance so every participant receives accurate, current, and equitable information?
- What mentor-to-applicant ratio keeps the program useful without creating an excessive burden on line pilots and recruitment staff?
- Which completion, readiness, quality, and selection metrics will determine whether the pilot should be expanded?
- How should Saudia manage confidentiality, conflicts of interest, expectations, and the clear rule that participation does not guarantee employment?

Scope Constraint

The proposed pilot prepares applicants to understand requirements, organize documentation, strengthen professional communication, and create a personal development plan. It does not provide flight instruction, promise a job, disclose assessment questions, or replace GACA licensing decisions.

Executive Summary

This proposal recommends that Saudia authorize a six-month pilot of the Saudia Cadet Readiness Mentorship Program (SCRMP) to improve the preparation of prospective cadet applicants before formal airline selection. Saudia posted a Cadet Program opening on June 6, 2026; the posting is now filled, confirming that cadet recruitment remains an active workforce channel.[1] At the same time, Saudia is expanding its operating platform: the airline announced 12 aircraft deliveries during 2026 and reports a current fleet of 149 aircraft.[2][3] Saudi Arabia's wider aviation strategy increases the urgency of developing local talent. GACA projects that the sector will require 274,000 direct jobs by 2030 and has also identified a national objective to train more than 50,000 aviation professionals by that year. [4][5] These conditions create an opportunity for Saudia to strengthen the quality, consistency, and readiness of its future pilot pipeline before applicants enter expensive selection and training stages.

The problem is not a lack of ambition among applicants. The problem is that applicants may receive fragmented, outdated, or informal guidance about licensing alignment, application documents, aviation English, professional expectations, and the sequence of milestones that makes them competitive. A preliminary written stakeholder interview with Ibrahim Aldawsari, a Saudi professional aviation student in the United States, identified cadet applicant mentorship as the most valuable improvement and applicant preparation as the desired outcome. Earlier written correspondence from the same stakeholder documented uncertainty about how U.S. flight training, academic program decisions, and progress toward a Commercial Pilot Certificate would align with Saudia's expectations. This type of uncertainty can lead candidates to spend time and money on poorly sequenced training, submit incomplete materials, or approach selection without a realistic readiness plan.

SCRMP addresses that gap through a controlled, competency-based pilot for 40 prospective applicants. Eight trained Saudia mentors would each support five mentees during a 12-week delivery period. Participants would complete four standardized modules: (1) pathway and licensing alignment, (2) application documentation and aviation English, (3) airline professionalism and multi-crew readiness, and (4) personal readiness planning. Four live workshops, three mentor check-ins, recruiter-approved reference materials, and a final readiness plan would provide both consistency and individual guidance. The program would borrow from established aviation practice: ICAO provides formal guidance for developing competency-based training and offers a course specifically on setting up mentoring programs in civil aviation, while United and Delta publicly use coaching, mentorship, and defined career-path structures for aspiring pilots.[6][7][8][9]

The proposed planning budget is SAR 107,800. The estimate covers 320 coordinator hours, limited mentor stipends, learning-platform configuration, content development, assessment, communications, and a 10 percent contingency. Success would be measured through an 85 percent completion target, a 20-percentage-point average gain on a readiness assessment, a 30 percent reduction in incomplete or incorrectly routed applicant questions among participants, at least 80 percent submission of approved readiness plans, participant satisfaction of 4.2 out of 5, and controlled mentor workload of no more than 15 hours per mentor. Later recruitment cycles would compare participant and nonparticipant progression rates while controlling for qualifications. Saudia should approve the limited pilot because it is affordable, measurable, reversible, and aligned with the company's growth and the Kingdom's aviation workforce priorities.

Introduction

Saudia's pilot pipeline is a strategic operating asset. Aircraft deliveries, route development, and the Kingdom's aviation ambitions create demand not only for more pilots, but for applicants who understand professional standards before they enter selection. Saudia announced that 12 new aircraft would join its fleet during 2026, including narrow-body and wide-body deliveries intended to support modernization and connectivity.[2] The airline also lists 149 aircraft in its current fleet.[3] These investments increase the importance of a dependable human-capital pipeline: new aircraft do not create capacity unless Saudia can recruit, train, and retain people who are prepared to operate within a disciplined airline system.

The national context reinforces this need. GACA reports that Saudi Arabia's aviation sector is expected to require 274,000 direct jobs by 2030, up from approximately 104,000, and national aviation initiatives include training more than 50,000 professionals.[4][5] Although these figures cover many occupations, pilot development remains one of the most visible and technically demanding pathways. Prospective cadets may invest several years and substantial personal resources in education, licensing, flight time, medical certification, English development, and multi-engine preparation. A poorly informed decision early in that process can delay readiness or create unnecessary cost.

Saudia currently provides a formal careers portal and periodically recruits through its Cadet Program. The official career posting dated June 6, 2026 is now marked filled.[1] A job posting, however, mainly serves candidates who are ready to apply during a defined window. It cannot by itself provide individualized preparation months or years earlier. Prospective applicants therefore often rely on university advisors, flight schools, social media, friends, or unofficial online discussions. Those sources may be helpful, but they do not necessarily reflect Saudia's current priorities, do not always distinguish FAA and GACA pathways, and may cause applicants to treat rumors as requirements.

The proposed Saudia Cadet Readiness Mentorship Program would create a controlled bridge between general public information and formal recruitment. It would not function as an early hiring decision. Instead, it would help a small,

selected group of future applicants understand the pathway, assess their current gaps, and make better development decisions. Saudia would control the curriculum, train the mentors, define ethical boundaries, and collect outcome data. Applicants would leave the program with accurate references, a realistic timeline, and a documented readiness plan rather than a guarantee of selection.

This proposal is positioned as a technical project plan because implementation requires more than goodwill. A mentorship program can fail if mentors give inconsistent advice, if applicants expect privileged access, if participation becomes too time-consuming, or if outcomes cannot be measured. SCRMP therefore uses standardized content, limited mentor hours, confidentiality rules, documented contact points, quantitative targets, and a pilot-before-scale approach. ICAO's competency-based training model emphasizes identifying performance gaps and developing training that addresses those gaps.[6] ICAO also identifies program design, management, mentor and mentee skills, and action planning as core elements of effective civil-aviation mentoring.[7] These principles provide a suitable approach for converting applicant uncertainty into measurable readiness.

The project team is well positioned to propose this solution because it combines the user perspective with organizational controls. Preliminary stakeholder evidence comes from a Saudi aviation student trained in the United States who has navigated private and instrument qualifications, progress toward commercial certification, international-study requirements, and questions about alignment with Saudia. Pilot Recruitment and Flight Training personnel would add current internal criteria and operational judgment. Together, these perspectives can create a program that is both applicant-centered and institutionally accurate.

Statement of Problem/Opportunity

The local problem is a preparation gap between aspiring Saudi pilots and Saudia's formal recruitment process. Prospective applicants can identify the broad objective becoming qualified airline pilots, but may not know how to sequence specific decisions. These decisions include when to convert or validate a foreign license, which documents to prepare, how to describe training interruptions, how to demonstrate aviation English, how to build multi-crew awareness, and when they are sufficiently ready to apply. Because the pathway involves multiple institutions and regulatory systems, uncertainty can persist even among motivated students.

The magnitude of the problem should be understood in terms of both individual cost and organizational efficiency. For an applicant, unclear guidance can produce duplicate coursework, avoidable travel, delayed certifications, incomplete documentation, or training choices that do not strengthen the next selection stage. For Saudia, the same gap can increase repetitive inquiries, inconsistent candidate quality, preventable application errors, and time spent explaining basic pathway information during a recruitment window. As fleet and workforce needs grow, unmanaged applicant uncertainty becomes a scaling problem.

Preliminary Stakeholder Interview

A written stakeholder interview was conducted on July 4th, 2026 with Ibrahim Aldawsari, a prospective Saudia cadet applicant and Saudi Professional Aviation student in the United States. The interview used three direct planning questions, supplemented by earlier written correspondence dated January 9, 2026. The purpose was to identify the applicant-side problem before designing the solution. The evidence is preliminary because it represents one stakeholder; the implementation method therefore requires additional interviews with recruiters, mentors, and recent applicants before launch.

Question	Response summary
What should Saudia improve?	Cadet applicant mentorship.
What outcome should the improvement achieve?	Better applicant preparation before formal selection.
What experience illustrates the need?	In earlier correspondence, the stakeholder sought guidance on how a U.S. aviation degree, approximately 190 flight hours at that time, Private Pilot and Instrument qualifications, progress toward a Commercial Pilot Certificate, and a university major change would affect the pathway to Saudia. He requested direct guidance because

Question	Response summary
	the available information did not resolve the alignment question.

Stakeholders and Effects

- Prospective applicants: need accurate sequencing, realistic expectations, and a way to identify gaps before investing additional time or money.
- Pilot Recruitment: needs complete applications, informed questions, and a candidate pool that understands the difference between preparation and guaranteed selection.
- Flight Operations Training and line pilots: need future trainees who value standardization, professionalism, communication, and multi-crew behaviors.
- Saudia leadership: needs a scalable Saudi talent pipeline that supports fleet growth without creating an uncontrolled advisory burden.
- GACA and the national aviation ecosystem: benefit when training decisions contribute efficiently to workforce-development goals.

Why the Opportunity Is Urgent

The June 2026 Cadet Program posting and Saudia's active fleet expansion show that the issue is current, not theoretical.[1][2] GACA's projected employment growth means that aviation organizations will compete for prepared talent.[4] A mentorship pilot launched now would let Saudia test a low-cost development channel before future recruitment cycles grow larger. Delaying the program preserves the current fragmented system, in which applicants may invest without reliable alignment and recruiters must repeatedly correct misunderstandings during application periods.

Approach and Rationale

The recommended approach is structured mentorship supported by standardized, competency-based preparation. A public FAQ alone would distribute information efficiently but would not diagnose individual gaps. A one-time webinar would reach many people but would provide little accountability or follow-through. Outsourcing applicant preparation to a third party would reduce internal workload but could weaken message control and create the appearance that paid coaching provides privileged access. A controlled mentorship pilot combines scale and individual support while allowing Saudia to preserve recruitment integrity. Comparable airline career-path programs use coaching, mentorship, and defined progression to support aspiring pilots, demonstrating that the basic model is operationally credible.[8][9]

Objectives and Project Plan

The solved problem is a repeatable preparation system in which selected prospective applicants receive the same accurate core guidance, understand their individual readiness gaps, and know the next actions required before applying. Recruiters receive fewer basic or incorrectly routed questions, mentors operate within clear boundaries, and Saudia gains data on which preparation needs occur most often.

Pilot Objectives

- 1. Standardize guidance:** Publish one recruiter-approved readiness framework covering pathway planning, documentation, communication, professionalism, and ethical program boundaries.
- 2. Improve applicant knowledge:** Increase the cohort's average score on a scenario-based readiness assessment by at least 20 percentage points between program entry and completion.
- 3. Convert advice into action:** Require each participant to submit a mentor-reviewed 6- to 18-month Individual Cadet Readiness Plan with milestones, risks, and evidence requirements.
- 4. Protect staff capacity:** Limit each mentor to five applicants and no more than 15 total program hours during the cohort.
- 5. Improve recruitment efficiency:** Target a 30 percent reduction in incomplete, duplicated, or incorrectly routed applicant questions among participants compared with their own baseline intake survey.
- 6. Generate a scale decision:** Deliver a final evaluation report with participant outcomes, mentor workload, cost per completer, risks, and a recommendation to expand, revise, or discontinue.

Implementation Steps

- 1. Validate needs and governance:** Pilot Recruitment will confirm current public requirements, identify topics that may be discussed, identify proprietary topics that may not be discussed, and designate an executive sponsor. The team will interview two recruiters, two training representatives, three current pilots, and six recent or prospective applicants.

2. **Build the standardized readiness package:** A program coordinator and subject-matter experts will create four short modules, a glossary, decision maps for domestic and foreign-trained applicants, documentation checklists, workshop slides, mentor scripts, and an Individual Cadet Readiness Plan template.
3. **Recruit and train mentors:** Eight volunteer Saudia pilots or qualified training/recruitment professionals will complete a three-hour orientation on coaching boundaries, confidentiality, escalation, accurate use of current materials, and documentation of meetings. Mentors will not evaluate or recommend mentees for hiring.
4. **Deliver the 12-week cohort:** Forty participants will complete asynchronous modules, attend four live workshops, and meet their assigned mentor three times. Missed requirements will trigger reminders and, after a defined threshold, removal from the pilot to protect mentor capacity.
5. **Evaluate and decide:** The coordinator will compare baseline and final assessments, track attendance and workload, review readiness plans, code frequently asked questions, survey participants and mentors, and report results to the sponsor within two weeks of cohort completion.

Program Content

Module	Primary content	Required output
1. Pathway Alignment	Current public eligibility, licensing pathway questions, foreign-training considerations, medical and English planning, and when to seek official clarification.	Personal gap inventory
2. Application Quality	Document checklist, accurate experience summaries, professional email and resume practices, and evidence organization.	Application document map
3. Airline Readiness	Professionalism, safety culture, multi-crew awareness, communication, feedback response, and ethical assessment preparation.	Scenario reflection
4. Readiness Plan	Milestone sequencing, risks, estimated completion dates, escalation questions, and decision points.	6- to 18-month readiness plan

Method or Activities

The project will use a design-build-test-evaluate methodology. The method treats mentorship as a managed learning intervention rather than an informal relationship. ICAO's competency-based training approach begins by identifying performance gaps that training can address and then developing a validated training package.[6] SCRMP applies that logic to pre-application readiness: the team will define observable preparation behaviors, create learning activities for those behaviors, and test whether participants improve.

1. Needs Assessment and Data Collection

During Weeks 1–4, the coordinator will conduct semi-structured interviews by secure video call or in person. Participants will include two Pilot Recruitment staff members, two Flight Operations Training representatives, three current Saudia pilots, and six applicants or recent candidates. Interviews will last approximately 30 minutes and will be documented through notes rather than recordings unless participants provide consent. Questions will ask where applicants most often misunderstand requirements, which errors create avoidable staff work, which behaviors indicate readiness, what advice mentors may safely provide, and what risks the program must control. The coordinator will also review the current public careers portal, recruiter-approved applicant communications, and any nonconfidential orientation material.

Preliminary questions and answers already collected are summarized in the Statement of Problem. They establish an applicant-side need for mentorship and better preparation. They do not establish the full organizational problem. Recruiter and pilot interviews are therefore a required pre-launch gate. If internal interviews show that another issue, such as document quality or licensing conversion, creates more value than general mentorship, the content emphasis will change while the pilot structure remains the same.

2. Curriculum and Tool Development

During Weeks 5–8, the coordinator will translate the needs assessment into a competency map. Each module will identify a desired behavior, a short explanation, a practice activity, evidence of completion, and an escalation route. For example, the documentation module will not merely tell participants to “prepare a complete application.” It will

require them to identify each document, its issuing authority, expiration or validity concerns, translation needs, and the person or office that can verify it. Content owners will review every module before release and will assign a revision date so guidance does not remain online after it becomes outdated.

3. Mentor Selection and Controls

Mentors will be selected for communication skill, reliability, and interest in applicant development, not only seniority. The mentor orientation will define five controls: use only approved materials for program requirements; do not disclose proprietary assessment content; do not promise employment or influence; document attendance and action items without recording sensitive personal details; and escalate licensing, medical, legal, or recruitment-policy questions to the designated owner. ICAO's civil-aviation mentoring course emphasizes program management, the roles of mentors and mentees, essential mentoring skills, and action planning.[7] Those elements will be built into the orientation and mentor guide.

4. Cohort Delivery

The pilot cohort will run for 12 weeks. Participants will complete one module approximately every three weeks. Live workshops will introduce the module and answer general questions; mentor meetings will focus on individual application of the material. The program will use a learning-management space already approved by Saudia or a restricted collaboration site. Each participant will see a completion dashboard, upcoming deadlines, approved resources, and the latest version date for each guidance document. The cohort will include Saudi students training domestically and abroad so the evaluation captures different pathway questions.

5. Evaluation Methodology

Evaluation will combine quantitative and qualitative evidence. A 20-item readiness assessment will use short scenarios about documentation, communication, pathway decisions, and professional judgment. The same competency blueprint, not necessarily the same question wording will be used at entry and completion. The coordinator will record module completion, workshop attendance, mentor contacts, mentor hours, escalation topics, participant satisfaction, and the percentage of completed readiness plans that meet the rubric. Open-ended comments will be coded into themes such as licensing, English, documents, timelines, financial planning, and expectations. The final report will compare actual results with the targets listed below.

Decision Rules and Alternatives

- Expand: at least four of six core targets are met, no major integrity or confidentiality issue occurs, and mentor workload remains within the limit.
- Revise and repeat: learning improves, but completion, workload, or documentation quality misses targets in correctable ways.
- Discontinue: the pilot creates recruitment-integrity concerns, cannot maintain accurate content, or produces no meaningful readiness improvement.

The principal alternatives remain a public FAQ, a one-time webinar, and third-party applicant coaching. The FAQ should still be improved as a supporting resource, but it cannot replace individual planning. Webinars can supplement the program but do not provide longitudinal accountability. Third-party coaching should not be the primary solution because Saudia would have less control over accuracy, access, and candidate expectations. Structured internal mentorship is therefore the recommended single step forward.

Resources (Human and Other)

SCRMP is designed as a limited pilot that uses existing expertise and a small amount of protected time. The project does not require aircraft, simulators, flight instructors, or changes to formal pilot selection. It requires program coordination, controlled subject-matter input, mentor time, a digital learning space, and evaluation support.

Human Resources and Management Structure

- Executive sponsor—Director of Pilot Recruitment and Training: approves scope, resolves cross-functional issues, and decides whether to scale.
- Program owner—Pilot Recruitment manager: approves public-facing requirements, mentor boundaries, and candidate communications.
- Program coordinator—0.25 to 0.30 full-time equivalent for six months: manages interviews, content, scheduling, participants, data, and reporting.
- Subject-matter reviewers—two recruitment staff and two training representatives: validate modules and answer escalated questions.
- Mentors—eight Saudia pilots or qualified aviation professionals: complete orientation and support five participants each.
- Learning technology support—one specialist for initial setup, access controls, troubleshooting, and data export.

- Evaluation support—one HR analytics or quality representative for survey design, data checks, and final metrics review.

Planning Budget

Resource	Basis of estimate	Estimated cost (SAR)
Program coordination	320 hours × SAR 150	48,000
Mentor stipends/protected time	8 mentors × 15 hours × SAR 250	30,000
Learning platform configuration	Access, permissions, dashboard, support	12,000
Content and workshop production	Templates, review cycles, accessibility	5,000
Assessment and reporting	Survey tools, analysis, final report	3,000
Contingency	Approximately 10%	9,800

Total pilot estimate: SAR 107,800

These figures are planning estimates for approval, not vendor quotations. The coordinator will replace them with Saudia labor rates and approved platform costs during Week 1. Costs exclude flight training, travel, license conversion, medical examinations, and participant expenses. The estimated cost is SAR 2,695 per available seat and approximately SAR 3,170 per completer if 34 of 40 participants meet the 85 percent completion target.

Schedule

Timing	Activity	Gate or deliverable
Weeks 1–2	Approval, sponsor assignment, governance and data plan	Approved charter and interview list
Weeks 3–4	Recruiter, training, pilot, and applicant interviews	Needs assessment and risk register
Weeks 5–8	Curriculum, tools, assessment, platform setup	Content-owner approval
Weeks 9–10	Mentor recruitment, orientation, participant selection	Eight mentors and 40 participants ready
Weeks 11–22	Twelve-week cohort delivery	Modules, workshops, check-ins, readiness plans
Weeks 23–24	Data analysis and executive decision report	Expand, revise, or discontinue recommendation

The timeline is realistic because the pilot uses a small cohort and existing digital tools. No participant should enter the program until governance, content ownership, mentor boundaries, and evaluation rules are approved. If content validation takes longer than planned, the cohort start should move rather than launching with incomplete or unverified guidance.

Discussion of Benefits and Justification

SCRMP offers value at three levels: applicants make better development decisions, recruitment receives a more prepared candidate pool, and Saudia gains a measurable workforce-development channel. The central benefit is not that mentorship makes selection easier. The benefit is that mentorship makes preparation more accurate. A candidate who understands the pathway can identify a missing qualification early, maintain better evidence, ask the correct office a focused question, and delay application when not ready. This protects both the candidate's resources and Saudia's selection capacity.

1. Better Prepared Applicants

The preliminary stakeholder evidence shows how a motivated applicant can still struggle to align U.S. flight training, academic decisions, flight-hour progress, and Saudia expectations. A standardized mentor process would convert that uncertainty into a documented plan. The proposed readiness assessment and final-plan rubric make improvement visible. The program's 20-percentage-point knowledge target, 80 percent readiness-plan target, and 85 percent completion target are ambitious enough to demonstrate value but realistic for a supported pilot cohort.

2. More Efficient and Consistent Recruitment Communication

A mentorship system allows Saudia to answer common questions once in approved modules and reserve individual time for genuine pathway differences. Mentors would use the same content, escalation contacts, and meeting

structure. This reduces the risk that two applicants receive conflicting advice from different employees. The target of a 30 percent reduction in incomplete or incorrectly routed questions creates a direct operational measure. The evaluation will also identify which topics generate the most confusion, allowing Saudia to improve its public careers information even if the mentorship pilot is not expanded.

3. Workforce Pipeline Alignment

Saudia's 2026 aircraft deliveries and the Kingdom's projected aviation-employment growth make early pipeline development timely.[2][4] The proposal aligns with ICAO's view that aviation organizations should identify performance gaps and use competency-based development to address them.[6] It also aligns with current airline practice. United Aviate publicly includes coaching and mentorship from United pilots, while Delta Propel provides defined pilot career paths and support for progression.[8][9] Saudia does not need to copy either program; however, these examples show that structured pre-employment development can be part of a serious airline talent strategy rather than an informal benefit.

4. Controlled Cost and Reversible Risk

The estimated SAR 107,800 pilot is small relative to the cost of flight training, aircraft acquisition, or a large recruitment campaign. The program can use existing staff, a limited cohort, and an approved digital platform. Its ethical boundaries are explicit: no guarantee of employment, no proprietary assessment content, no mentor influence over selection, and no replacement for official licensing or medical authorities. If the data do not justify expansion, Saudia can discontinue the program after six months while retaining the reusable modules, interview findings, frequently asked question analysis, and readiness-plan template.

5. Why This Approach Is Stronger Than the Alternatives

A better FAQ is necessary but insufficient because it cannot tell an individual which gap to address first. A one-time webinar is inexpensive but does not create sustained action or reliable completion data. A third-party service could deliver coaching quickly but would reduce Saudia's control over accuracy and could create unequal access or the mistaken belief that paid preparation influences hiring. The proposed internal pilot combines standardized information, individualized planning, controlled access, and evaluation. It is therefore the most balanced solution for the current opportunity.

Conclusion

Saudia should approve a 24-week pilot of the Saudia Cadet Readiness Mentorship Program to improve the consistency and quality of applicant preparation before formal selection. The project would use eight trained mentors, four standardized modules, 40 participants, a SAR 107,800 planning budget, and clear completion, learning, workload, and communication metrics. Because the program is limited, controlled, and measurable, it gives Saudia a practical way to strengthen its future Saudi pilot pipeline while supporting fleet growth and national aviation workforce goals.

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