

Misuse of Slots Enforcement Code

Annual Report – 2020/21

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Professional | Striving for better

1. Introduction

ACL is the UK's designated airport slot coordinator. We work with 45 airports across the globe to ensure efficient use of capacity and better operational performance for the benefit of airport operators, airlines and passengers.

Part of ACL's regulatory function is to monitor the use of slots to identify misuse at the UK's coordinated airports. This is an important contributor to ensuring fair and efficient access to limited airport resources. The aim of monitoring and enforcement is to encourage operators to improve their slot performance at airports through better scheduling and operations and thus to contribute to smoother, more efficient airport operations. This benefits all operators and their customers, the travelling public and freight shippers.

We have recently adjusted the reporting dates for our annual sanctions reports (previously covering the period 1 April to 31 March) to bring this reporting in line with our separate financial reporting year for sanctions (which reports to the year ending Sept).

This report covers the Summer 20, Winter 20 and Summer 21 IATA seasons.

Going forwards, we will report on the period 1 October to 30 Sept and cover the winter and summer seasons falling in the relevant reporting year.

Information on how ACL monitors and investigates slots misuse, how we take enforcement action against misuse and carrier's rights can be found on the ACL website at <https://www.acl-uk.org/slot-sanctions/>

2. Monitoring activity

ACL's monitoring process is explained on our web site (<https://www.acl-uk.org/slot-sanctions/>).

Due to the significant impact on the aviation industry of the Covid-19 pandemic, for S20 onwards we have revised our monitoring focus to provide more leeway to carriers. However, ACL's monitoring activities remain important as they help ensure airports are best able to plan for what is flown and to allow fair access to resources. This is particularly relevant where airports have been forced to take facilities off-line during the pandemic or to restrict movements at terminals ring fenced for passengers originating from red listed countries.

Whilst our coordination teams continue to work hard to monitor use of slots and to identify serious misuse, the number of queries sent roughly halved over this reporting period. That is not surprising due to the down turn in flying.

The following charts provide some insight into the number and types of misuse we are seeing at our airports but the impact of Covid-19 on operations has meant that the number of queries raised on an airport by airport basis is less stable.

Figure 3 shows that the number of queries sent in the reporting period for off-slot operations has decreased. This may be partly due to the fact that less flying provides carriers more latitude to re-time and partly due to the increased leeway ACL is giving. Conversely, the number of queries sent for no-slot operations has increased, which is partly reflective of the fact that more ad hoc operations (including cargo) are taking place and those carriers may be less used to operating at constrained airports.

Figure 1: Total queries sent by ACL by UK airport – Summer seasons

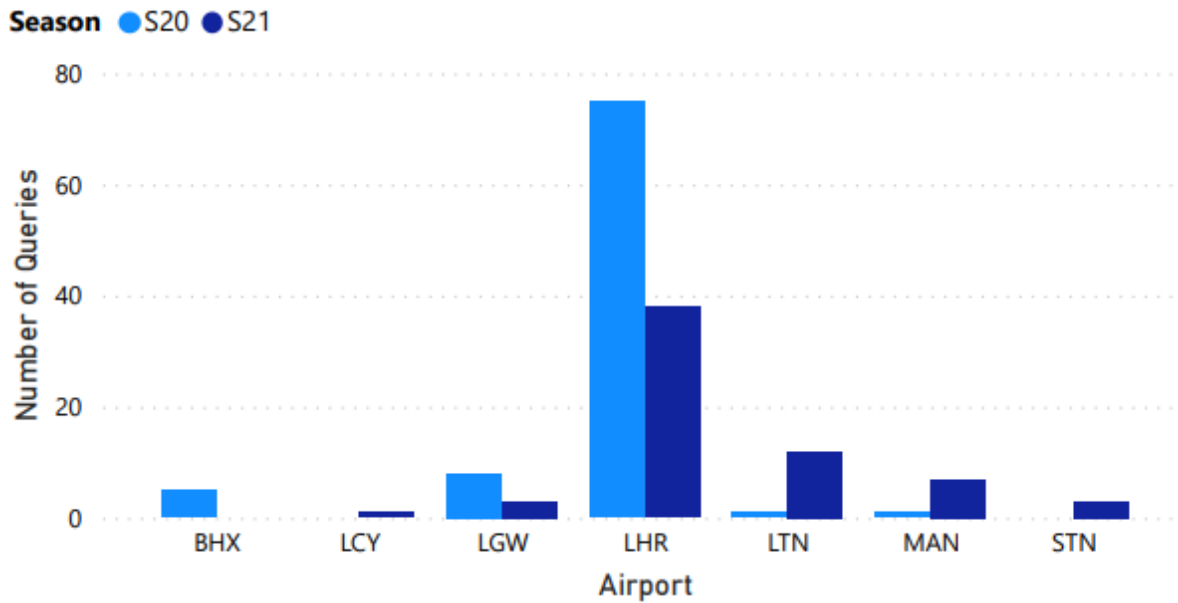


Figure 2: Total queries sent by ACL by UK airport – Winter seasons

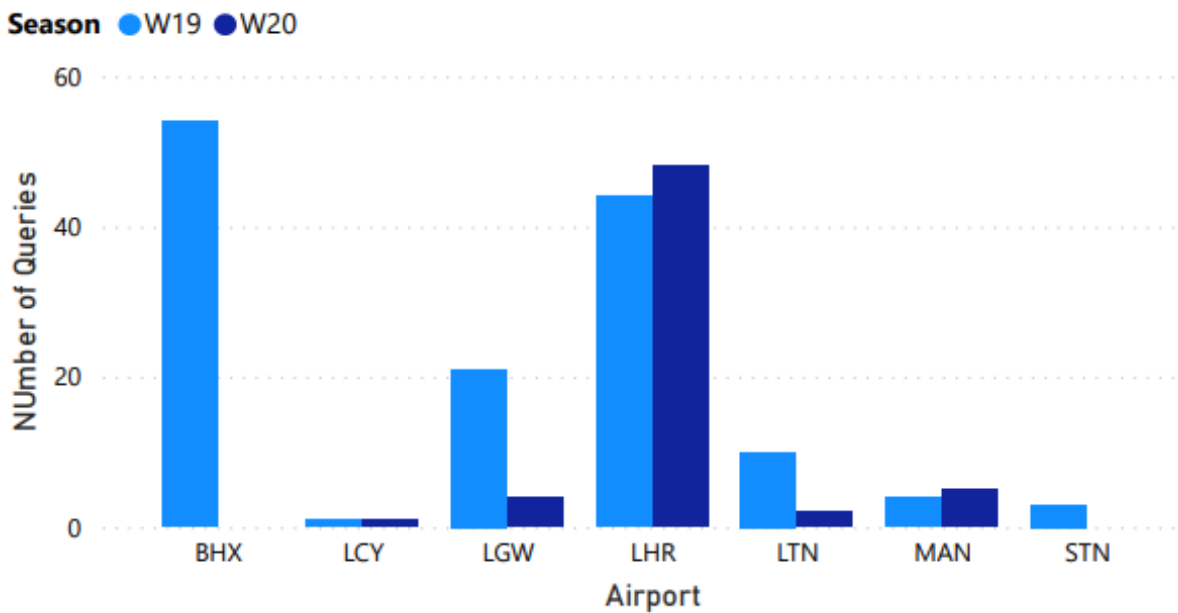


Figure 3: Total queries sent by ACL split by season and type of misuse.

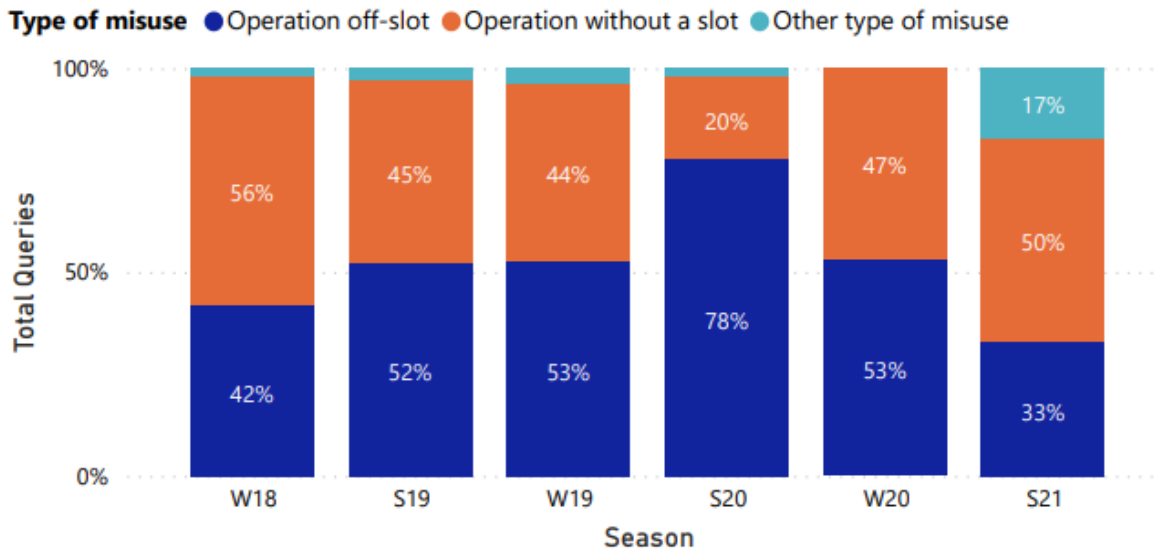


Figure 4: Total queries sent by ACL split between Seasonal and ad-hoc

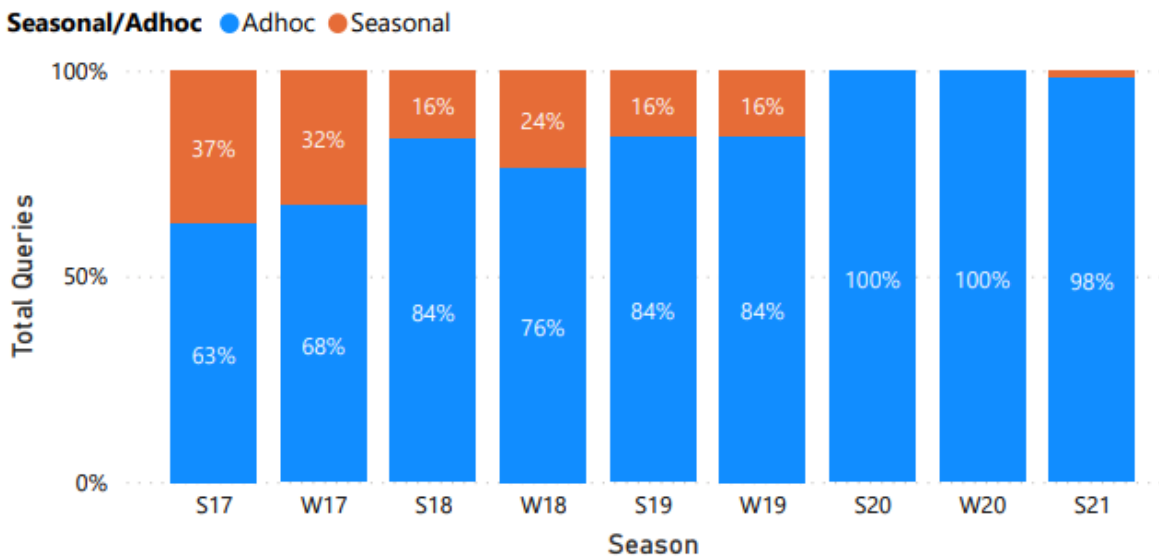
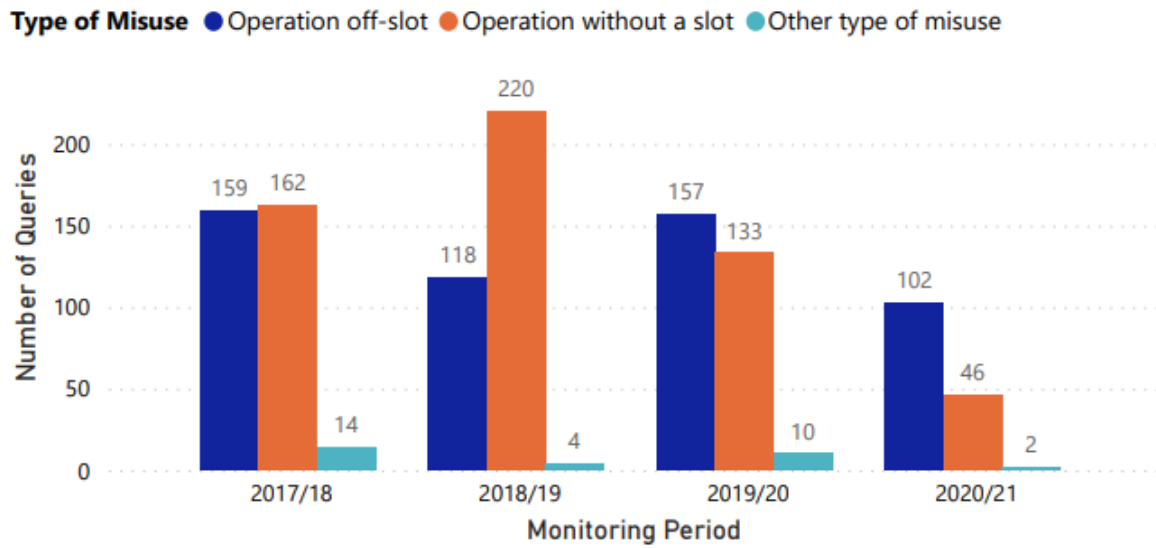


Figure 5: Number of queries sent by ACL by monitoring period and type of misuse.



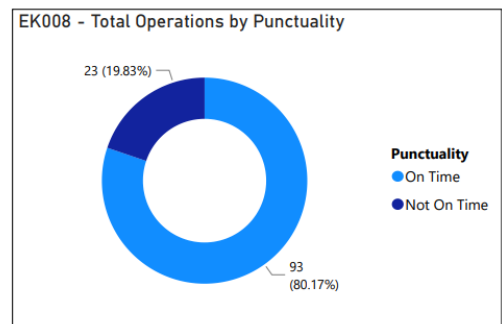
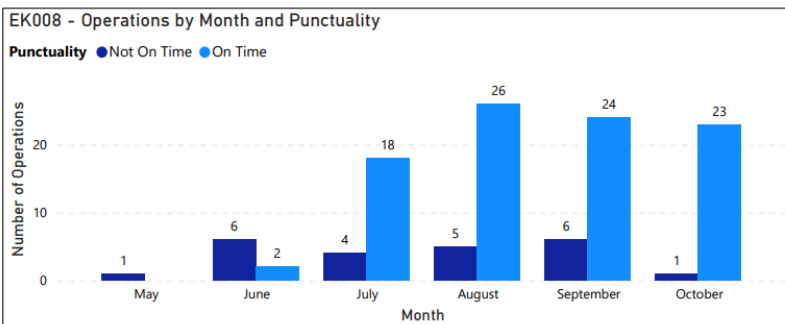
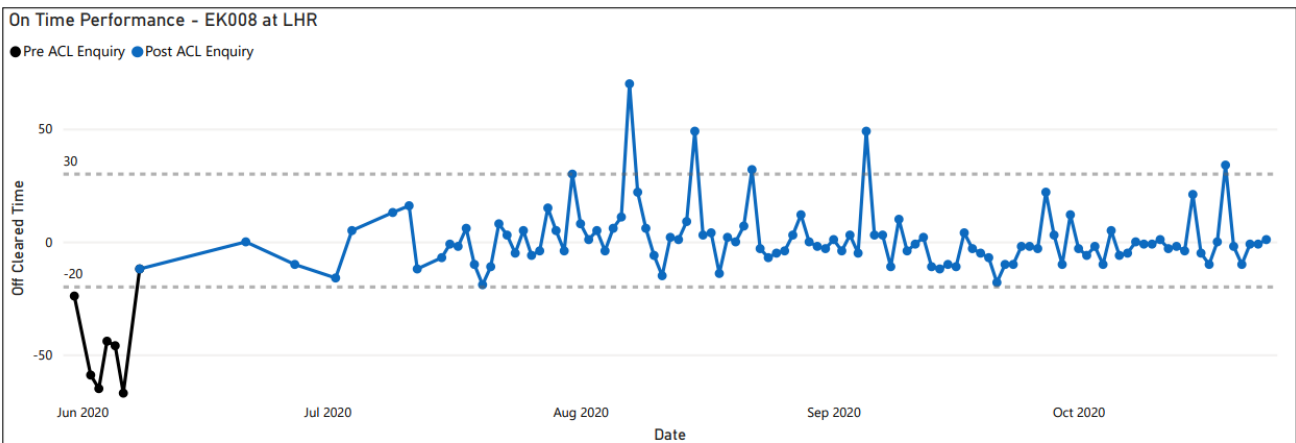
3. Examples of corrective action facilitated by ACL’s monitoring activities

Where possible, we engage with carriers to encourage behavioural change to improve future slot performance without the need to formally sanction misuse.

The following case studies show some of the success we have had during the S20, W20 and S21 seasons.

EK008 LHR S20

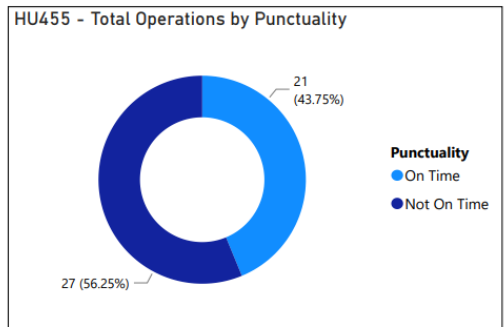
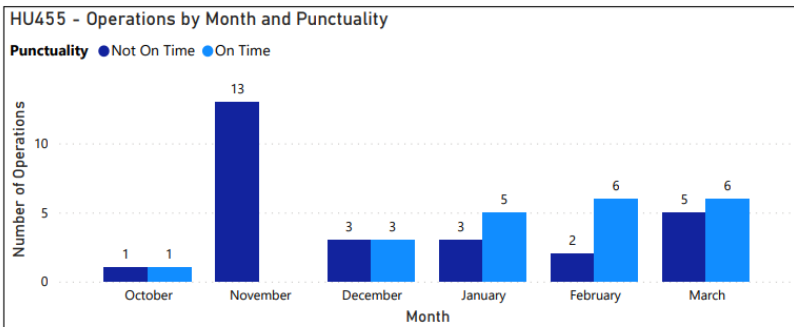
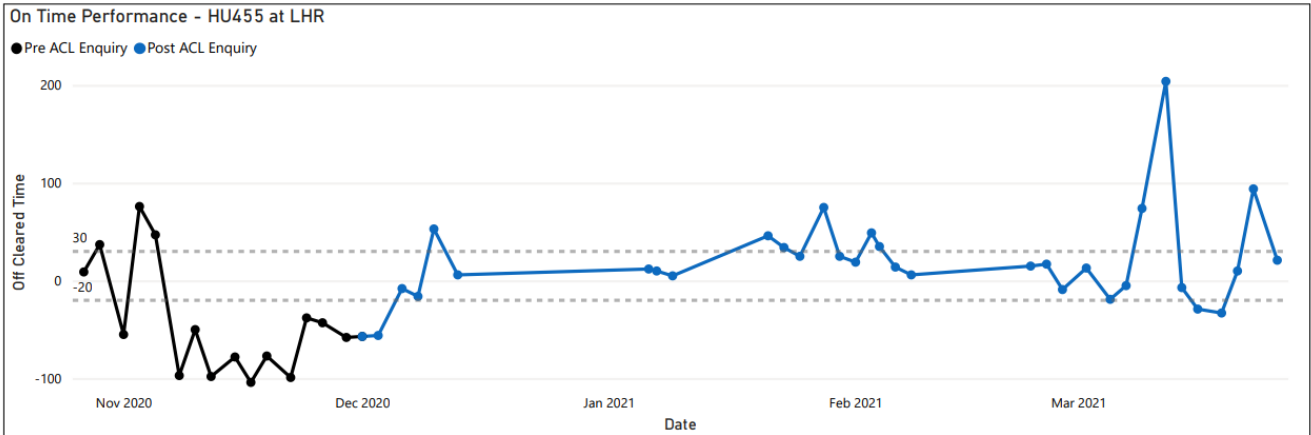
During the middle part of the S20 season, ACL’s slot monitoring team identified the Emirates’ Dubai service was continually arriving early into Heathrow. The coordination team raised a query and worked with Emirates who adjusted the ground times. This successfully stopped the early operation for the remainder of the season, with the flight subsequently obtaining an on-time punctuality rate of 85%.



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HU455 LHR W20

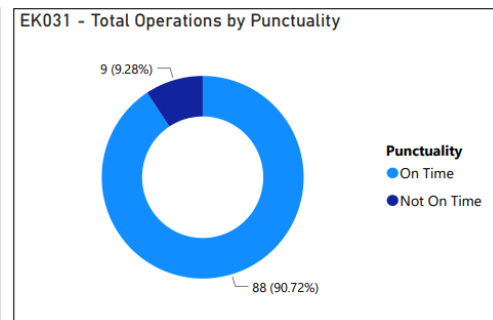
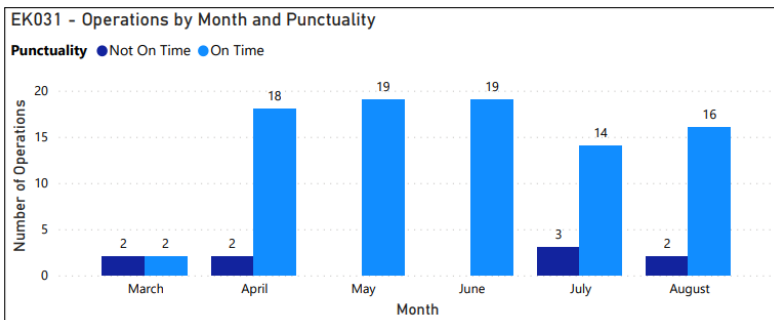
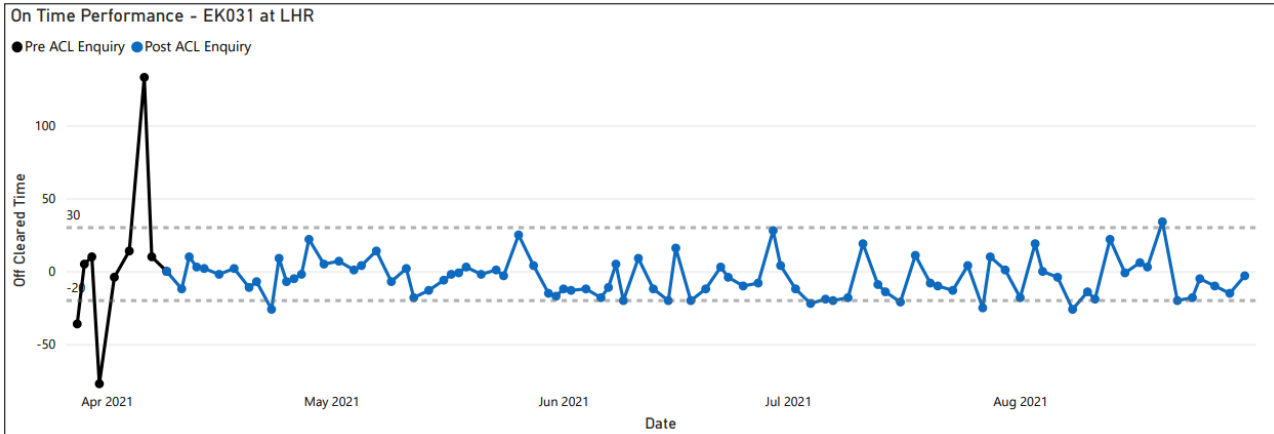
At the start of the W20 season, ACL’s monitoring team identified Hainan Airlines flight HU455 operating significantly off-slot. After obtaining slot monitoring data for the first month of the season, the coordination team raised a query with the Hainan team who identified that the wrong flight time estimation was being used. As a result, Hainan Airlines adjusted the arrival slot time into LHR, resulting in a on-time punctuality rate of 62% for the remainder of the season.



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EK031 LHR S21

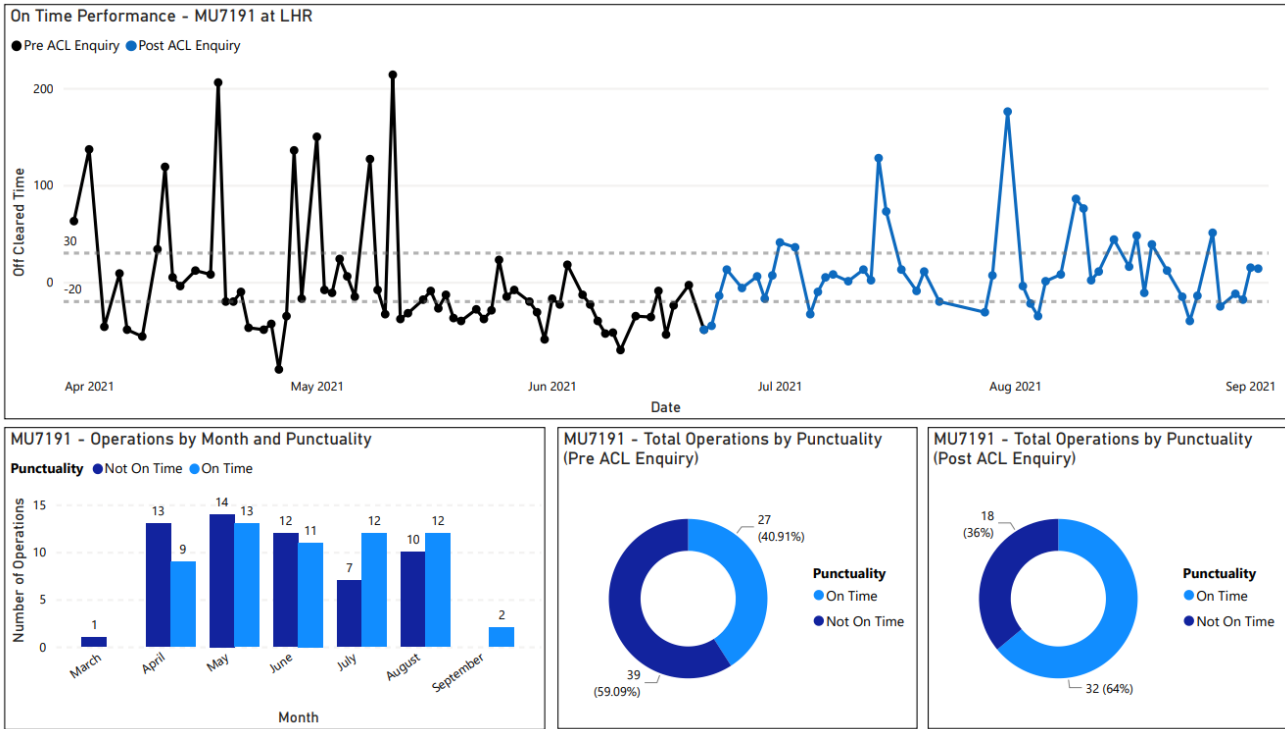
During the start of the S21 season, ACL’s monitoring team identified some flights on this service operating significantly early into, and late out of, Heathrow. Following the raising of a query, Emirates identified the issue was caused by a favourable tail wind. Emirates reviewed their block hours and instructed their team to hold the aircraft longer at DXB. This service operated at 93% on-time for the remainder of the season.



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MU7191 LHR S21

For the first few months of the S21 season, China Eastern was identified as operating the majority of their MU7191 services off-slot at Heathrow. Investigations with MU identified a block time issue and MU subsequently amended the arrival slot time leading to the punctuality rate increasing by 23% for the remainder of the season.



Other examples of behavioural change enabled by our slot monitoring include:

LHR S20

- Virgin Atlantic flights identified as operating early. Following our query, VS reviewed and amended the block time
- United Airlines flight identified as arriving early due to reduced flying time. Following ACL query, UA removed 15 minutes of block time from its ORD to LHR flight and issued an internal NOTAM to hold at departure station where a flight is planned to arrive more than 20 minutes early
- British Airways flight identified as arriving consistently early. BA agreed to review block time following ACL's query
- British Airways flight identified as arriving early due to incorrect block time. Following our query, BA amended the block time which corrected the issue

W20

- British Airways flights identified as arriving early. Following the query, BA reviewed the block time and corrected the issue
- Virgin Atlantic flight identified as arriving early due to short flight times and using a 787 aircraft instead of the usual A350. Following the query raised, VS reviewed its block time for S21

S21

- Virgin Atlantic flight identified as arriving early. Following ACL's query, VS added extra block time resulting in early arrivals, adjustments and improved performance
- British airways flights identified as arriving early. Following our query, BA reviewed the block time

LGW

S20

A number of instances of operations without a slot were identified by our coordination teams early in the season. Following queries raised by our team, an issue with the process in place between the carrier's Planning and Operations departments was identified. In all cases the carriers took immediate action to rectify the processes and no further instances of operations without a slot were recorded.

S21

Our coordination team issued three warning letters for operations without a slot to the Polish Airforce, British Airways and Red Star Aviation. Following those letters, the carriers all took corrective action and no further action has been necessary.

4. Sanctions levied for slot misuse

For the period 29 March 2020 to 30 September 2021, ACL levied the following sanctions for slots misuse:

- 27 October 2020 - £8,000 sanctioned against Air China for three significantly off-slot operations at London Heathrow during S20
- 3 December 2020 - £20,000 sanctioned against British Airways for five operations without a slot at London Heathrow during W20
- 18 March 2021 – £15,000 sanctioned against British Airways for three operations without a slot at London Heathrow during W20
- 26 July 2021 - £5,000 sanctioned against British Airways for one operation without a slot at London Heathrow during S21
- 26 July 2021 - £2,000 sanctioned against Cargojet for one significantly off-slot operation at London Heathrow during S21
- 30 September 2021 - £26,000 sanctioned against Hifly for three operations of flights from red listed countries in breach of London Heathrow airport capacity constraints

5. Independent reviews

Under section 14 of the Enforcement Code, carriers can request an independent review of ACL's decision to impose a financial sanction for slots misuse. More information on this can be found on our website at <https://www.acl-uk.org/acls-monitoring-sanctions-process/>

For this reporting period, no independent reviews were brought.