

# FlightStream Analysis Interface Module (AIM) Manual

John Dannenhoffer (Syracuse) and Marshall Galbraith MIT

February 28, 2025



---

0.1 Introduction . . . . .	1
0.1.1 FlightStream AIM Overview . . . . .	1
0.2 Attribution . . . . .	1
0.3 FlightStream Fluid Properties . . . . .	1
0.4 FlightStream Data Transfer . . . . .	2
0.4.1 Data transfer to FlightStream (FieldIn) . . . . .	2
0.4.2 Data transfer from FlightStream (FieldOut) . . . . .	2
0.5 Geometry Representation The geometric . . . . .	2
0.6 AIM Units . . . . .	2
0.6.1 JSON String Dictionary . . . . .	2
0.7 AIM Inputs . . . . .	3
0.8 aimInputsCART3D . . . . .	4
0.9 AIM Outputs . . . . .	4
0.10 AIM Execution . . . . .	5
Bibliography . . . . .	7



## 0.1 Introduction

### 0.1.1 FlightStream AIM Overview

A module in the Computational Aircraft Prototype Syntheses (CAPS) has been developed to interact (primarily through input files) with Research in Flight's FlightStream [1]. FlightStream predicts the aerodynamic performance of a vehicle via a panel method, which makes it very fast.

An outline of the AIM's inputs and outputs are provided in [AIM Inputs](#) and [AIM Outputs](#), respectively.

Geometric attributes recognized by the AIM are provided in [Attribution](#).

The accepted and expected geometric representation are detailed in [Geometry Representation The geometric](#).

## 0.2 Attribution

The following list of attributes drives the FlightStream geometric definition.

- **capsLength** This attribute defines the length units that the \*.csm file is generated in and is not optional for FlightStream. The FlightStream input grid will be scaled to either the default length of METER or the user specified length unit (see [AIM Units](#)).
- **capsReferenceChord** and **capsReferenceSpan** [Optional] These attributes may exist on any *Body*. Their value will be used as the reference moment lengths in FlightStream's input file with their units assumed to be consistent with the attribute "capsLength". These values may be alternatively set through an input value, "ReferenceChord" (see [AIM Inputs](#))
- **capsReferenceArea** [Optional] This attribute may exist on any *Body*. Its value will be used as the reference area in FlightStream's input file with its units assumed to be consistent with the attribute "capsLength". This value may be alternatively set through an input value, "ReferenceArea" (see [AIM Inputs](#))
- **capsReferenceX**, **capsReferenceY**, and **capsReferenceZ** [Optional] These attribute may exist on any *Body*. Their value will be used as the reference moment lengths in FlightStream's input file with their units assumed to be consistent with the attribute "capsLength". These values may be alternatively set through an input value, "ReferenceX" (see [AIM Inputs](#))

## 0.3 FlightStream Fluid Properties

Structure for the load tuple = ("Property", "Value").

- **density = "(no default)"**  
Reference density
- **pressure = "(no default)"**  
Reference pressure
- **sonic\_velocity = "(no default)"**  
Reference speed of sound
- **temperature = "(no default)"**  
Reference temperature
- **viscosity = "(no default)"**  
Reference viscosity

## 0.4 FlightStream Data Transfer

### 0.4.1 Data transfer to FlightStream (FieldIn)

- **"Displacement"**

Retrieves nodal displacements (as from a structural solver) and updates FlightStream surface mesh.

The FlightStream AIM has the ability to transfer surface data (e.g. pressure distributions) to and from the AIM using the conservative and interpolative data transfer schemes in CAPS.

### 0.4.2 Data transfer from FlightStream (FieldOut)

- **"Pressure"**

Loads the pressure distribution from FlightStream vtk file. This distribution may be scaled based on Pressure = Pressure\_Scale\_Factor\*Pressure, where "Pressure\_Scale\_Factor" is an AIM input ([AIM Inputs](#))

## 0.5 Geometry Representation The geometric

representation for the FlightStream AIM requires that the body be either a solid body (SOLIDBODY) or a manifold sheet body (SHEETBODY).

## 0.6 AIM Units

FlightStream expects units for all inputs, and by default the AIM uses SI units, i.e.

- mass : kg
- length : meter
- time : seconds
- temperature : K A unit system may be optionally specified during AIM instance initiation to use a different set of base units. A unit system may be specified via a JSON string dictionary for example: unitSys = '{"mass": "lb", "length": "feet", "time": "seconds", "temperature": "R"}'

### 0.6.1 JSON String Dictionary

The key arguments of the dictionary are described in the following:

- **mass = "None"**

Mass units - e.g. "kilogram", "k", "slug", ...

- **length = "None"**

Length units - FlightStream support: "inch", "millimeter", "feet", "mile", "meter", "kilometer", "mils", "micron", "centimeter", "microinch"

- **time = "None"**

Time units - e.g. "second", "s", "minute", ...

- **temperature = "None"**

Temperature units - e.g. "Kelvin", "K", "degC", ...

## 0.7 AIM Inputs

The following list outlines the FlightStream inputs along with their default values available through the AIM interface.

- **ProjName = "flightstream\_CAPS"**  
Name for files generated by flightstream AIM.
- **FlightStream = "FlightStream"**  
The name of the FlightStream executable. May include full path.
- **Mach = 0.0 (default)**  
Mach number
- **Alpha = 0.0 (default)**  
Angle of attack [degree]
- **Beta = 0.0 (default)**  
Sideslip angle
- **Fluid\_Properties = 0.0 (default)**  
Reference fluid properties. Altitude must be NULL. See [FlightStream Fluid Properties](#).
- **Altitude = NULL (default)**  
Altitude used to compute Fluid Properties. The Fluid\_Properties input must be NULL.
- **ReferenceChord = NULL**  
This sets the reference chord for used in force and moment calculations. Alternatively, the geometry (body) attribute (see [Attribution](#)) "capsReferenceChord" maybe used to specify this variable (note: values set through the AIM input will supersede the attribution value).
- **ReferenceSpan = NULL**  
This sets the reference span for used in force and moment calculations. Alternatively, the geometry (body) attribute (see [Attribution](#)) "capsReferenceSpan" maybe used to specify this variable (note: values set through the AIM input will supersede the attribution value).
- **ReferenceArea = NULL**  
This sets the reference area for used in force and moment calculations. Alternatively, the geometry (body) attribute (see [Attribution](#)) "capsReferenceArea" maybe used to specify this variable (note: values set through the AIM input will supersede the attribution value).
- **ReferenceX = NULL**  
This sets the reference X for moment calculations. Alternatively, the geometry (body) attribute (see [Attribution](#)) "capsReferenceX" maybe used to specify this variable (note: values set through the AIM input will supersede the attribution value).
- **ReferenceY = NULL**  
This sets the reference Y for moment calculations. Alternatively, the geometry (body) attribute (see [Attribution](#)) "capsReferenceY" maybe used to specify this variable (note: values set through the AIM input will supersede the attribution value).
- **ReferenceZ = NULL**  
This sets the reference Z for moment calculations. Alternatively, the geometry (body) attribute (see [Attribution](#)) "capsReferenceZ" maybe used to specify this variable (note: values set through the AIM input will supersede the attribution value).
- **ReferenceVelocity = NULL**  
This sets the reference velocity
- **ConvergenceTol = 1.0e-5 (default)**  
Solver convergence tolerance

- **MaxIterations = 500**  
Maximum number of solver iterations
- **Export\_Solver\_Analysis = NULL**  
List of file types to export. Available options:
  - Tecplot
  - VTK
  - CSV
  - BDF
  - Force\_Distributions
- **FlightScript = NULL**  
List of flight script commands to append at the end of script.txt
- **Mesh\_Morph = False**  
Project previous surface mesh onto new geometry.
- **Surface\_Mesh = NULL**  
A Surface\_Mesh link.

## 0.8 aimInputsCART3D

- **Pressure\_Scale\_Factor = 1.0**  
Value to scale Pressure data when transferring data. Data is scaled based on  $\text{Pressure} = \text{Pressure\_Scale\_Factor} * \text{Pressure}$ .

## 0.9 AIM Outputs

The following list outlines the FlightStream outputs available through the AIM interface. All variables currently correspond to values found in the \*.plt file

Aerodynamic coefficients:

- **Cx** = X-force coefficient
- **Cx** = X-force coefficient
- **Cx** = X-force coefficient
- **CL** = Lift coefficient
- **CDi** = (?) drag coefficient
- **CDo** = (?) drag coefficient
- **CMx** = X-moment coefficient
- **CMy** = Y-moment coefficient
- **CMz** = Z-moment coefficient



## 0.10 AIM Execution

If auto execution is enabled when creating an FlightStream AIM, the AIM will execute FlightStream just-in-time on Linux with the command line:

```
FlightStream script.txt > flightstreamOut.txt
```

and on Windows with the command:

```
FlightStream -hidden -script script.txt > flightstreamOut.txt
```

In both cases the FlightStream executable is assumed to be in the PATH environment variable.

The analysis can also be explicitly executed with caps\_execute in the C-API or via Analysis.runAnalysis in the pyCAPS API.

Calling preAnalysis and postAnalysis is NOT allowed when auto execution is enabled.

Auto execution can also be disabled when creating an FlightStream AIM object. In this mode, caps\_execute and Analysis.runAnalysis can be used to run the analysis, or FlightStream can be executed by calling preAnalysis, system, and posAnalysis as demonstrated below with a pyCAPS example:

```
print ("\n\npreAnalysis.....")
flightstream.preAnalysis()
print ("\n\nRunning.....")
flightstream.system("FlightStream.exe -hidden -script script.txt"); # Run via system call in inputs analysis
    directory
print ("\n\npostAnalysis.....")
flightstream.postAnalysis()
```



# Bibliography

[1] Altair flightstream. [1](#)

