



Report of External Evaluation and Review

Eagle Flight Training Limited

Date of report: 3 August 2010

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Purpose of this Report

The purpose of this external evaluation and review report is to provide a public statement about the Tertiary Education Organisation's (TEO) educational performance and capability in self-assessment. It forms part of the accountability process required by Government to inform investors, the public, students, prospective students, communities, employers, and other interested parties. It is also intended to be used by the TEO itself for quality improvement purposes.

Brief description of TEO

Location: Ardmore Airport, Auckland

Type: Private training establishment (PTE)

Size: Full-time students: seven international students currently enrolled plus four international students awaiting student visas, and one domestic student.

Part-time students: 19 domestic students, primarily engaged in maintaining flying hours for specific ratings.

Staff: Three A Category flight instructors

Courses: Certificate in Commercial Pilot Licence/Instrument Rating

Certificate in Commercial Pilot Training

Certificate in Basic Pilot Training

Certificate in Pilot Training (C Category Instructor)

Certificate in Advanced Visual Flight Rules Navigation

Certificate in Advanced Instrument Flight Rules Navigation

Sites: One as above

Eagle Flight Training Limited (Eagle Flight) was first registered as a private training establishment with the New Zealand Qualifications Authority in June 2006, but has recently been subject to a sale of shares, with the new owners taking responsibility for the company in early 2010. Eagle Flight currently offers training towards gaining flying licences such as the Private Pilot Licence (PPL) and the Commercial Pilot Licence (CPL), as well as a range of pilot ratings. Eagle Flight is based at Ardmore Airport in close proximity to approximately 100 aviation businesses including other flying schools. Students have access to a Redbird FMX (full-motion simulator) flight simulator.

The training is designed to prepare students to move into employment within the aviation industry.

The most recent quality assurance review was an audit conducted in 2008 and Eagle Flight met all but five of the requirements for ongoing registration at that time. The requirements not met included governance and management, personnel, learner information, entry and support, and the achievement of goals and objectives.

Executive Summary

Statement of confidence on educational performance

NZQA is **Confident** in the educational performance of **Eagle Flight Training Limited**

Eagle Flight has been operating under its new ownership for approximately two months, and in this short time has introduced a number of genuine and comprehensive enhancements, such as offering formative exams to better prepare students and offering practical flying concurrent with theory training, with the expectation that these will probably bring about improved positive outcomes. In the last two months four examinations and a number of flight assessments have been held and all students who had attempted these exams had gained a pass. Only one staff member remains from the previous ownership.

Eagle Flight has employed very highly qualified and experienced staff and is well supplied with physical and learning resources for the small number of students that it currently has. The stated intention of the flight instructors is to teach the students holistically in order to prepare them to take leadership roles in their careers, rather than aiming for students to simply achieve their qualifications and ratings only. It is too early to see evidence of the success of this strategy. Students and staff interviewed at this evaluation expressed a high level of confidence and satisfaction, both with the changes recently introduced and with their experience of the education and training provided.

While it is too early to reach judgements regarding long-term outcomes for students studying under the new ownership, students interviewed at this evaluation stated clearly their intention and confidence that they would be well prepared to gain employment as pilots in their home countries following graduation.

Because there are no specific achievement records or data available from the previous years under the prior owners, it is too early yet to express a strong statement of confidence in the education outcomes of students. However, this evaluation finds that the new owners of Eagle Flight have introduced many positive changes which are likely to enable students to experience educational success and subsequently gain positive outcomes in careers of their choice. Early educational results are 100 per cent positive..

Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **Not Yet Confident** in the capability in self-assessment of **Eagle Flight Training Limited**

The evaluation team observed that all staff demonstrated a reflective and critical thinking approach to their specific role, and that staff are making a genuine effort to actively review their processes and were making changes towards improving processes and outcomes. Currently there is evaluative self-assessment occurring at the level of the individual staff member rather than across the organisation in a systematic way. The organisation is yet to fully develop its policies and procedures for evaluative self-assessment and to incorporate

these results into its organisational quality systems in order to bring about a consistent approach across the organisation.

Given that the new owners took over Eagle Flight in March 2010, there has not been sufficient time to establish evidence of ongoing evaluative self-assessment leading to meaningful improvements. However, there are a number of existing quality checks in place such as programmed internal audits, the use of quality improvement forms (QIFs), and regular staff meetings to discuss students' progress and overall organisational matters.

The evaluation team is confident that the changes being put in place will lead to significant and meaningful ongoing improvements as the new processes are coordinated into a planned and coordinated approach to evaluative self-assessment across the organisation.

TEO response

Eagle Flight has confirmed the factual accuracy of this report.

Basis for External Evaluation and Review

Self-assessment and external evaluation and review are requirements of course approval and accreditation (under sections 258 and 259 of the Education Act 1989) for all TEOs that are entitled to apply. The requirements are set through the course approval and accreditation criteria and policies established by NZQA under section 253(1)(d) and (e) of the Act.

In addition, for registered private training establishments, the criteria and policies for their registration require self-assessment and external evaluation and review at an organisational level in addition to the individual courses they own or provide. These criteria and policies are set by NZQA under section 253(1)(ca) of the Act.

NZQA is responsible for ensuring TEOs continue to comply with the policies and criteria after the initial granting of approval and accreditation of courses and/or registration. The Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics Quality (ITPQuality) is responsible, under delegated authority from NZQA, for compliance by the polytechnic sector, and the New Zealand Vice-Chancellors' Committee (NZVCC) has statutory responsibility for compliance by universities.

This report reflects the findings and conclusions of the external evaluation and review process, conducted according to the policies and criteria approved by the NZQA Board.

The report identifies strengths and areas for improvement in terms of the organisation's educational performance and capability in self-assessment.

External evaluation and review reports are one contributing piece of information in determining future funding decisions where the organisation is a funded TEO subject to an investment plan agreed with the Tertiary Education Commission.

External evaluation and review reports are public information and are available from the NZQA website (www.nzqa.govt.nz).

Findings

The conclusions in this report are derived using a standard process and are based on a targeted sample of the organisation's activities.

Information relevant to the external evaluation and review process, including the publication Policy and Guidelines for the Conduct of External Evaluation and Review, is available at: <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/for-providers/keydocs/index.html>

Outline of scope

The agreed scope of the external evaluation and review of Eagle Flight included the following mandatory focus areas:

- Governance, management, and strategy
- Student support including international students.

The following programme focus area includes all students enrolled with the organisation:

- Flight Training.

Part 1: Answers to Key Evaluation Questions across the organisation

This section provides a picture of the TEO's performance in terms of the outcomes achieved and the key contributing processes. Performance judgements are based on the answers to key evaluation questions across the focus areas sampled. This section also provides a judgement about the extent to which the organisation uses self-assessment information to understand its own performance and bring about improvements, i.e. capability in self-assessment.

1.1 How well do learners achieve?

The rating in this focus area for educational performance is **Insufficient Evidence**

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this focus area is **Adequate**.

Records are not available for student achievements from the previous owners of Eagle Flight to establish how well students have been achieving in the past. However, in the short period (two months) since the change of ownership, students have sat four examinations as well as several flight assessments, and all students who attempted these have achieved a pass.

The new owners have established student record books which include achievements and progressive records. These provide a detailed and substantial record of students'

achievements and progress. One of the intentions of the record books is to provide handover notes for flight instructors to ensure continuity of the training and to maximise learning opportunities. Evidence presented at this evaluation showed that this procedure is working well and is providing a good level of continuity between instructors. At this stage, student achievement and progress records are in hard copy and are maintained at the level of the individual student, thus there are no organisation-wide records to review overall success. However, the organisation currently has a small student population and this approach is appropriate for its size. The organisation is planning to expand its student numbers and staff have begun planning to explore the best way to transfer all student information into a digital format for improved ease of access to all staff, and to improve security of records and the ability to review student progress across the organisation.

The acting chief flying instructor has in the past two months of operation established a process for running formative examinations to better prepare students to achieve success in their summative examinations. It is too early to ascertain whether this approach will in fact improve pass rates or pass marks. All aeronautical-related examinations are offered through Aviation Services Ltd (ASL), as arranged by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA).

Staff are actively exploring ways to improve students' achievements and to track and monitor students' progress. However, at this stage there is no organisation-wide, systematic approach to this, and no long-term student achievement data is available. Early results indicate that students are in fact achieving very well, and the evaluation team is confident that the changes being put in place are highly likely to be effective.

1.2 What is the value of the outcomes for key stakeholders, including learners?

The rating in this focus area for educational performance is **Insufficient Evidence**

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this focus area is **Adequate**.

There are no long-term records of student outcomes in terms of immediate achievements or longer-term benefits and value gained. However, the new staff are actively engaged in exploring how to track the value of outcomes to students and other interested parties. To this effect they have established an Eagle Flight Facebook page as one means of maintaining contact with past students. This approach has proved very useful for other, similar organisations.

One of the stated intentions of the new owners is to train students in an holistic manner in order to better prepare them to take leadership roles in their future organisations rather than to simply gain their qualifications and ratings. The organisation also intends to provide students with a broader experience of New Zealand beyond their flight training at Ardmore, such as including a training flight across the South Island of New Zealand. It is too early to ascertain how well this is working.

The immediate outputs from this training are licences and ratings as awarded by CAA, and these also meet the requirements of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO).

Students' achievement of these licenses and ratings will equip them to apply for a range of roles within the aviation industry in their respective home countries.

While it is too early to ascertain how well the outcomes of training with Eagle Flight are valued, there are sufficient indicators currently to provide a reasonable level of confidence that students are in fact being well prepared to gain employment in the aviation industry. The organisation has begun exploring self-assessment practices, but as yet these are not systematised across the organisation.

1.3 How well do programmes and activities match the needs of learners and other stakeholders?

The rating in this focus area for educational performance is **Good**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this focus area is **Adequate**.

Eagle Flight has recently introduced student record books to record student progress and to record significant success and challenges that students may be experiencing. While the format and the utility of the record book is currently being established and it is too early to judge how well it contributes to meeting students' learning needs, the evaluation team saw potential benefits in this approach. Flight instructors meet with individual students monthly to review their progress. Staff and students interviewed at this evaluation confirmed that the meeting was valued and contributed well to their overall progress. This provides a good level of close supervision for students.

Eagle Flight indicates to prospective students that they need an International English Language Testing System (IELTS) average score of 5.5 in order to succeed well in the flight training. While this is not a specific requirement, some checks are made of students' levels of English language at the time of enrolment. Where students are deemed not to meet this requirement, Eagle Flight has put in place appropriate support. For example, it has recently contracted an English language teacher to support some students who do not have sufficient English language ability. At the time of this evaluation it was too early to ascertain how well this was working. This support is an appropriate response to students with lower than optimal English language, but Eagle Flight will need to monitor students' competency with English language closely to ensure the safety of their students and others in the air.

As already noted, the programmes offered by Eagle Flight effectively match the requirements for students to gain employment in the aviation industry. The organisation is also regularly audited by CAA in order to meet regulatory requirements, and no major issues have been identified. The organisation's "exposition" (strategic plan) includes plans for reviewing students' progress on a three-monthly basis to meet CAA requirements.

Overall, the new owners have not yet had time to establish how well the programmes and activities match the needs of stakeholders including students. However, early indications are that needs are well matched and no issues or significant gaps were identified at this evaluation.

1.4 How effective is the teaching?

The rating in this focus area for educational performance is **Good**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this focus area is **Adequate**.

Eagle Flight has appointed three highly qualified flight instructors for fixed-wing aircraft and helicopters, including ratings for multi-engine flying, night flying, instrument flying, and aerobatics. The current number of enrolled full-time students is small and this allows for a high level of one-to-one attention and ready access to aircraft to build up flying hours. Eagle Flight has the resource capacity to enrol more students than it currently has without affecting the quality of teaching. However, as already noted, many of the evaluative self-assessment practices are in the early stages of development and as student numbers grow the quality of teaching and learning will need to be closely monitored and reviewed in a more systematic and structured manner. The initial indications are that students are achieving very well, with all students passing the exams for which they have sat over the past two months, and students and staff interviewed at this evaluation expressed a high level of satisfaction with both the teaching and learning.

Eagle Flight has not yet had the opportunity to implement its performance review processes for flight instructors, as these are due to be carried out six-monthly. However, examinations are conducted by an independent organisation, ASL, and the 100 per cent pass rate to date confirms at least to some extent the quality of teaching and learning.

Staff meet weekly to discuss students' progress and emerging issues, and there is a well-established process for briefing prior to, and debriefing after, practical flights. Students and staff interviewed at this evaluation commented on the fact that instructors purposefully build trusting relationships with students which facilitated the exchange of frank feedback, confirming the value of this process and its contribution to the overall learning environment. Students have good access to sufficient teaching and learning resources including a flight simulator and a small fleet of leased and owned aircraft. The organisation has developed appropriate financial planning and budgeting to allow for the expansion of resources as required, and for appropriate ongoing repairs and maintenance.

The early indications are that Eagle Flight is providing a highly effective learning environment with students making good progress, and this evaluation identified no significant emerging issues or concerns. The organisation's evaluative self-assessment practices are sound but at the early stages of development and have yet to be established as a fully coherent system.

1.5 How well are learners guided and supported?

The rating in this focus area for educational performance is **Good**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this focus area is **Adequate**.

Most students enrolled with Eagle Flight are international students and all are over 18 years of age. While there is no formal induction checklist or similar, students and staff confirmed that the information provided to students at the time of enrolment is sufficient and appropriate. Students have easy access to a dedicated staff member who is responsible for student support and who is available if needed outside of normal tuition hours. Close contact is maintained with students to ensure their accommodation is safe and comfortable.

While there are some gaps in student records, staff are aware of these and are currently planning the best approach to ensure records are full and accurate. A more systematic approach will be required once student numbers have grown as projected.

Students are currently recruited in their home country through agents contracted to Eagle Flight and no major issues were identified in regard to this practice. The organisation is currently exploring the possibility of running behavioural or psychological testing of potential students to better ensure successful long-term outcomes. Pastoral care staff meet quarterly to review how well students are supported, although no records are currently kept of this activity. When students have moved to Eagle Flight from other flight training schools, staff have supported students well, such as helping them apply for variations to their existing visas and providing English language tuition to raise the level of English to an appropriate level to ensure their success.

As noted, there are some gaps in documentation in this area and staff are taking appropriate steps to address these. Evaluative self-assessment, while strong at the individual staff level, is not yet fully systematised across the organisation.

1.6 How effective are governance and management in supporting educational achievement?

The rating in this focus area for educational performance is **Good**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this focus area is **Adequate**.

The new owners of Eagle Flight have yet to revise the quality management system and supporting documents to reflect the change of ownership and the many new processes being put in place, and also to reflect the changed requirements for ongoing registration with NZQA introduced in 2009. However, the evaluation team noted that the new owners have made a number of significant improvements in the past two months which are likely to contribute well to students' achievements and to worthwhile outcomes. These improvements include greater clarity in students' achievement records, extra English language tuition, and the employment of highly experienced and qualified staff.

The evaluation team observed coherence across all staff in their focus on giving students the best experience possible to equip them to perform and achieve beyond the bare minimum. Staff are familiar with and competent in reflective critical review of their own

areas of work, with many staff identifying where they wish to implement improvements in areas such as processes or documentation.

There are currently some gaps such as a lack of appropriate checklists or similar (e.g. enrolment, IELTS scores, induction, students' visa due dates etc) to ensure consistency; and gaps in policies and procedures (e.g. staff performance reviews and evaluative self-assessment) to ensure business continuity in the case of staff turnover.

Part 2: Performance in focus areas

This section reports significant findings in each focus area, not already covered in Part 1.

2.1 Focus area: Governance, management, and strategy

The rating in this focus area for educational performance is **Good**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this focus area is **Adequate**.

2.2 Focus area: Student support including international students

The rating in this focus area for educational performance is **Good**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this focus area is **Adequate**.

Eagle Flight is providing a safe and supportive learning environment for its international students on campus and is keeping in close contact outside of the normal hours of tuition, such as regular visits to students' accommodation and a designated support staff member with 24-hour phone contact if needed. The students interviewed at this evaluation were very positive about their experience at Eagle Flight and of the quality of the support offered, and commented that they would recommend the organisation to their friends and colleagues.

The evaluation did not identify any significant areas of concern regarding Eagle Flight's compliance with the Code of Practice for the Pastoral Care of International Students.

2.3 Focus area: Flight Training

The rating in this focus area for educational performance is **Good**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this focus area is **Adequate**.

Actions Required and Recommendations

Further actions

Because NZQA is Not Yet Confident in Eagle Flight Training's capability in self-assessment, NZQA will contact the organisation to agree appropriate actions aimed at achieving a level of at least Confident in educational performance and capability in self-assessment

Progress toward improvement will be monitored by NZQA and a further EER scheduled at an appropriate time.

Recommendations

It is recommended that Eagle Flight:

- Continue to enhance processes to monitor and track students' achievement and overall progress, individually as well as achievements across the student group
- Develop tracking mechanisms to monitor improvements resulting from new initiatives
- Establish organisational policies and procedures for evaluative self assessment, which captures the existing good practices of individual staff.
- Further explore and develop processes to monitor students longer term outcomes
- Develop check lists , desk-files or similar for routine tasks such as student enrolment and induction
- Closely monitor the organisation's capacity and readiness in the event of an increase in student numbers.

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