



Mana Tohu Mātauranga o Aotearoa
New Zealand Qualifications Authority

External Evaluation and Review Report

Otago Aviation Academy Ltd

Date of report: 12 March 2026

About Otago Aviation Academy Ltd

Otago Aviation Academy (OAA) is a small aviation training establishment based at Wanaka Airport which delivers programmes for international students. The organisation operates alongside its partner organisation, U-Fly Wanaka, with shared premises, aircraft and instructional staff.

Type of organisation:	Private training establishment (PTE)
Location:	6 Spitfire Lane, Wanaka Airport, Central Otago
Eligible to enrol international students:	Yes
Number of students ¹ :	Domestic: one full-time student ² International: five full-time students ³
Number of staff:	Six full-time equivalents ⁴
TEO profile:	See Otago Aviation Academy – NZQA website. While OAA was approved for PTE registration in October 2022, and its two programmes were approved in September 2023, 2025 is the first year that the PTE has begun delivering to students.
Last EER outcome:	This is OAA's first external evaluation and review (EER).
Scope of evaluation:	The EER covered all training design and delivery.
MoE number:	7020
NZQA reference:	C64576
Dates of EER visit:	10 and 11 December 2025

¹ There have been no graduates to date.

² This was an international student who gained residency during their programme. They were not eligible for Tertiary Education Commission funding or student loans.

³ Students are from China, India and one from Papua New Guinea.

⁴ Because staff are employed across both OAA and its partner organisation, U-Fly Wanaka, none are dedicated exclusively to OAA at this stage.

Summary of results

Otago Aviation Academy is in the early stages of establishing its aviation training provision, with some initial indications of student progress, personalised pastoral support and industry-aligned programme delivery. However, systems for systematic evaluation, evidence-based decision-making and consistent educational performance are still developing.

Not Yet Confident in educational performance

- Most students are showing positive achievement, supported by close monitoring, although limited data and inconsistent student progress highlight the need for more systematic analysis of educational performance.
- Students experience good value from industry-aligned instruction, aircraft access and clear aviation pathways, with systems for tracking graduate outcomes now beginning to develop.

Not Yet Confident in capability in self-assessment

- Programme design is industry-aligned and resourced, but the reliance on student-directed learning is challenging for some students. Programme delivery requires more structured evaluation and refinement.
- Pastoral and academic support is a strong feature, with personalised assistance and culturally responsive practices contributing positively to student engagement and wellbeing.
- Governance and management provide clear direction, good resourcing and a collaborative culture, with self-assessment capability improving. However, the new management structure is yet to be tested in a sustained delivery environment.
- Compliance practices and safety systems have recently been strengthened, though overdue submissions were again evident. A more systematic oversight and documentation are needed to fully demonstrate NZQA-related compliance capability.

Key evaluation question findings⁵

1.1 How well do students achieve?

Performance:	Good
Self-assessment:	Marginal
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>Student achievement to date is mixed. Within the small initial cohort, some students are progressing steadily, while others have experienced significant delays, linked by OAA to factors such as motivation, health, language proficiency and visa-related pressures. Further monitoring and analysis around those delays, focussed on programme review, would be beneficial. A more recent group with prior theory training is demonstrating stronger early performance.</p> <p>Achievement is assessed through ASPEQ theory examinations and Flight Test NZ practical assessments, which are overseen and validated by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA). These assessments provide assurance of competency against aviation regulatory standards; however, they are not subject to NZQA moderation or external quality assurance processes.</p> <p>Students are developing important aviation theory and operational skills, alongside gains in confidence, discipline and professional behaviours that contribute to their potential readiness for further training and future employment pathways.</p> <p>OAA maintains effective, personalised tracking of student progress, supported by progress sheets and regular instructor engagement. This close monitoring enables early identification of issues; however, the very small cohort limits the ability to draw broader trends at this stage.</p> <p>Early under-performance prompted OAA to tighten student selection and readiness processes, including enhanced interviews, readiness assessments and closer</p>

⁵ The findings in this report are derived using a standard process and are based on a targeted sample of the organisation's activities.

	<p>scrutiny of recruitment agents. While these changes are expected to have positive effects, students without prior aviation theory continue to require intensive support and show significantly slower progression. Ongoing monitoring and analysis of these issues is essential.</p> <p>Self-assessment related to achievement is emerging but still largely informal. Although staff discuss student progress frequently, evaluative reflections are not yet systematically documented, and OAA has limited evidence of analysing achievement patterns or assessing the effectiveness of its interventions.</p>
Conclusion:	Overall, Otago Aviation Academy is building a sound platform for aviation training, with early signs of positive student progress. With continued focus on systematic review and evidence-informed decision-making, OAA is well placed to strengthen its educational performance as it grows.

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

Performance:	Good
Self-assessment:	Good
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>Although OAA has no graduates yet, early indications show potential value for students and alignment with global aviation workforce needs, particularly the international pilot shortage.</p> <p>Students are attracted to pathways such as private pilot and commercial pilot licences, and the programme structure supports these goals effectively. Small classes and good aircraft availability give students valuable practical experience, including mountain flying and extended cross-country activities.</p> <p>Instructors bring diverse cultural and international aviation experience to the training, enabling them to connect well with students and provide culturally responsive teaching and pastoral support.</p> <p>Student feedback – both formal and informal – indicates that they perceive high value in the programme, feel well</p>

	<p>supported, and see clear relevance to their future aspirations.</p> <p>OAA is developing appropriate systems for future destination tracking and graduate surveys, demonstrating emerging self-assessment capability in understanding stakeholder value.</p>
Conclusion:	<p>Early indications suggest that OAA delivers good value for students and the aviation industry. Students report positive learning experiences and feel well prepared for their aviation goals. Although there are no graduates yet, systems for capturing future graduate outcomes are developing.</p>

1.3 How well do programme design and delivery, including learning and assessment activities, match the needs of students and other relevant stakeholders?

Performance:	Marginal
Self-assessment:	Marginal
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>Programme design is aligned with industry needs, with content mapped to qualification requirements. As mentioned, the assessments conducted externally through ASPEQ and Flight Test NZ ensure consistency and alignment with CAA standards.</p> <p>OAA is currently seeking approval to deliver the New Zealand Diploma in Aviation (Level 5), which has been developed nationally by NZQA in collaboration with Ringa Hora Workforce Development Council. The programme is designed for international learners and follows an agreed template and assessment regime aligned with CAA requirements.</p> <p>A substantial component of the OAA delivery model relies on self-directed learning (SDL). While SDL suits motivated and independent students, it has proven poorly suited to others, particularly those with limited aviation theory experience, differing educational backgrounds or English language difficulties. This has resulted in inconsistent study habits and significantly delayed exam progression.</p>

	<p>The sequential programme structure, which requires completion of theory before progressing to flight training, exacerbates these issues. When students struggle with SDL, it directly constrains their advancement, undermines motivation, and impacts operational readiness. It can also create pressure on visa timelines and result in extra costs for students. As a consequence, shortcomings in the delivery approach have a disproportionate impact on overall achievement and progress.</p> <p>Staff have introduced increased academic and individualised support, including weekly one-on-one sessions and more structured monitoring for students who struggle with theory or external exam performance. While promising, these interventions are relatively recent and largely reactive.</p> <p>OAA has not demonstrated that it has critically assessed whether reliance on SDL remains an appropriate or sustainable delivery model for its student cohort, indicating ongoing weakness in programme design evaluation and self-assessment capability.</p>
<p>Conclusion:</p>	<p>OAA's programme design is well aligned with aviation industry expectations, supported by external assessments and new programme development. The reliance on self-directed learning poses significant challenges for some students and should be reviewed</p>

1.4 How effectively are students supported and involved in their learning?

<p>Performance:</p>	<p>Good</p>
<p>Self-assessment:</p>	<p>Good</p>
<p>Findings and supporting evidence:</p>	<p>Students receive clear, timely information and comprehensive induction, which covers programme expectations, safety procedures, Code of Practice requirements and practical guidance for settling into life in New Zealand, helping them begin their studies confidently.</p> <p>Attendance is actively monitored, with staff contacting students promptly if they are late or absent. This consistent follow-up reinforces accountability and helps</p>

	<p>sustain engagement, which is particularly important for international students adjusting to new routines.</p> <p>When students struggle, staff offer targeted interventions, including individual meetings and weekly one-to-one academic support for those experiencing repeated ASPEQ exam failures.</p> <p>Pastoral care is a notable strength, with students having 24/7 access to a designated support person, access to first aid trained staff, and culturally responsive initiatives such as pairing new students with mentors of the same ethnicity – an approach that has already improved engagement and confidence.</p> <p>Self-assessment capability in this area is developing constructively, with staff using both formal and informal feedback to refine support systems. Recent strengthening of entry and readiness processes also reflects growing evaluative practice aimed at ensuring students are better prepared for the demands of the programme.</p>
Conclusion:	OAA provides a highly personalised support environment, with strong rapport between instructors and students and regular one-on-one academic and pastoral engagement.

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

Performance:	Good
Self-assessment:	Good
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>Governance and management provide clear strategic direction and leadership, with a deliberate emphasis on managed, sustainable growth. Governance effectiveness was previously compromised by the former chief executive's failure to meet NZQA's fit and proper person requirements, which required regulatory intervention by NZQA. Shortly before the EER, the PTE implemented an alternative management structure, with the former chief executive relinquishing governance and senior management roles while remaining employed solely as a flight instructor. To provide assurance of effective governance, the PTE will need to demonstrate to NZQA in subsequent monitoring that this separation is sustained in</p>

	<p>practice and that the former chief executive maintains clear and ongoing distance from any governance or decision-making functions. The organisation is well resourced for its current scale, with low staff-to-student ratios and shared access to aircraft and staff through its partnership with U-Fly Wanaka. OAA has an instructional team who are committed to long-term aviation training careers.</p> <p>Academic leadership promotes a collaborative and communicative environment, with regular formal and informal meetings that enable staff to share insights, coordinate teaching and support activities, and respond promptly to emerging student needs.</p> <p>OAA is building strong industry relationships, including active engagement with Ringa Hora, ensuring development aligns with current and emerging aviation sector expectations.</p> <p>Self-assessment capability at the leadership level is developing positively, with emerging systems for data analysis and meaningful actions to towards addressing historical compliance issues. This may lead to more reliable organisational oversight and a robust safety culture.</p> <p>OAA's self-assessment capability is developing positively, with a clear willingness to address identified gaps. While systems for analysing student achievement and outcome data and documenting evaluative practice are still maturing, recent actions, such as strengthening compliance processes and refining entry and readiness checks, demonstrate growing organisational reflection and responsiveness.</p>
<p>Conclusion:</p>	<p>Governance and management provide clear direction and leadership, supported by effective resourcing and a collaborative organisational culture. As self-assessment becomes more systematic and embedded, OAA's ability to evaluate performance and drive continuous improvement will continue to strengthen.</p>

1.6 How effectively are important compliance accountabilities managed?

Performance:	Marginal
Self-assessment:	Marginal
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>OAA's compliance management has improved over the last year, and new systems such as a compliance calendar and external consultancy support are in place.</p> <p>International student files viewed contained the required documentation – well ordered and accessible. There are established processes for attendance monitoring, discipline, complaints and academic record-keeping, providing confidence in day-to-day regulatory compliance.</p> <p>A proactive safety culture underpins the organisation's operations. The externally monitored safety management system and the recent positive CAA audit demonstrate a high level of aviation safety compliance and robust operational oversight.</p> <p>Public-facing information, including marketing materials and website content, is accurate and up to date.</p> <p>While fee protection arrangements meet NZQA requirements, the overdue 2025 student fee protection audit highlights the ongoing challenges with managing all compliance timelines. This reflects a history of significant compliance failures, including fit and proper person matters and repeated late submissions, which have required substantial regulatory intervention. While systems have recently been strengthened, the organisation has not yet demonstrated a sustained track record of timely and reliable compliance.</p> <p>OAA has completed Code of Practice self-reviews for the past two years, though these were relatively limited due to the small student cohort at the time. As student numbers grow, broader staff involvement and more systematic evidence collection will be required to ensure the process is meaningful and robust.</p>
Conclusion:	While new tools and greater attention to compliance have recently strengthened practice, some areas of compliance management continue to fall short. As systems mature,

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	more systematic and sustained oversight will be necessary to provide assurance of full compliance capability.
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Focus areas

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

2.1 All training – design and delivery

Performance:	Marginal
Self-assessment:	Marginal

Recommendations

Recommendations are not compulsory but their implementation may improve the quality and effectiveness of the training and education provided by the tertiary education organisation (TEO). They may be referred to in subsequent external evaluation and reviews (EERs) to gauge the effectiveness of the TEO's quality improvements over time.

NZQA recommends that Otago Aviation Academy Ltd:

- Evaluate the suitability of SDL for different student profiles and consider introducing more structured, guided theory delivery or differentiated support for students who struggle with independent study.
- As student numbers increase, implement structured analysis of achievement, progression and non-completion data to identify trends, disparities and areas for targeted improvement.
- Strengthen academic committee processes by documenting reviews, decisions and actions, and ensuring these are informed by evidence from student performance, feedback and assessment outcomes.
- Finalise and implement graduate destination tracking and stakeholder feedback processes to support future evaluation of student outcomes and programme value.

Requirements

Requirements relate to the TEO's statutory obligations under legislation that governs their operation. This include NZQA Rules and relevant regulations promulgated by other agencies.

NZQA requires Otago Aviation Academy Ltd to:

- Ensure that all NZQA compliance obligations are met accurately and within required timeframes, supported by a robust and systematically monitored compliance management framework.

This includes (but is not limited to) student fee protection requirements, audits, attestations and all required reporting obligations. The organisation must be able to demonstrate sustained and timely compliance as a condition of maintaining PTE registration and consent to deliver approved programmes.

Regulatory basis for this requirement:

Private Training Establishment Registration Rules 2025

Rule 6.1.3

- a) provide to NZQA within five months of the end of the financial year of the PTE a copy of the annual financial statements the PTE is required to prepare to meet its annual reporting obligations under any relevant legislation.
- c) complete and supply to NZQA the Annual Registration Fee Return by 30 June each year, the form for which is available on the NZQA website
- f) keep its financial records up to date and maintain an adequate system of internal financial controls that enable the PTE to compile financial statements that comply with its annual reporting obligations under any relevant legislation

Failure to meet compliance timelines, including repeated late submissions, indicates non-compliance with these requirements.

Student Fee Protection Rules 2022

Rule 13(1) A Provider must supply to NZQA and to its Supplier, before the end of five months following each financial year end of the Provider, and at the Provider's expense:

- a. a conclusion from an independent chartered accountant provided under an assurance engagement confirming that the provider is Compliant; and

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- b. a further conclusion from the independent chartered accountant provided under an assurance engagement confirming the compliance of the Provider's Supplier with these Rules and relevant Mechanisms (however, if the Supplier is Public Trust, this paragraph (b) does not apply).

Late or overdue student fee protection audits constitute a breach of these rules.

Appendix

Conduct of external evaluation and review

All external evaluation and reviews are conducted in accordance with NZQA's published rules. The methodology used is described in the web document <https://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers-partners/external-evaluation-and-review/>. The TEO has an opportunity to comment on the accuracy of this report, and any submissions received are fully considered by NZQA before finalising the report.

Disclaimer

The findings in this report have been reached by means of a standard evaluative process. They are based on a representative selection of focus areas, and a sample of supporting information provided by the TEO under review or independently accessed by NZQA. As such, the report's findings offer a guide to the relative quality of the TEO at the time of the EER, in the light of the known evidence, and the likelihood that this level of quality will continue.

For the same reason, these findings are always limited in scope. They are derived from selections and samples evaluated at a point in time. The supporting methodology is not designed to:

- *Identify organisational fraud⁶*
- *Provide comprehensive coverage of all programmes within a TEO, or of all relevant evidence sources*
- *Predict the outcome of other reviews of the same TEO which, by posing different questions or examining different information, could reasonably arrive at different conclusions.*

⁶ NZQA and the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) comprehensively monitor risk in the tertiary education sector through a range of other mechanisms. When fraud, or any other serious risk factor, has been confirmed, corrective action is taken as a matter of urgency.

Regulatory basis for external evaluation and review

External evaluation and review is conducted under the Quality Assurance (including External Evaluation and Review (EER)) Rules 2022, which are made by NZQA under section 452(1)(t) of the Education and Training Act 2020 and approved by the NZQA Board and the Minister of Education.

Self-assessment and participation and cooperation in external evaluation and review are requirements for:

- maintaining accreditation to provide an approved programme for all TEOs other than universities, and*
- maintaining consent to assess against standards on the Directory of Assessment Standards for all TEOs excluding universities, and*
- maintaining micro-credential approval for all TEOs other than universities.*

The requirements for participation and cooperation are set through the Programme Approval and Accreditation Rules 2022, the Consent to Assess Against Standards on the Directory of Assessment and Skill Standards Rules 2022 and the Micro-credential Approval and Accreditation Rules 2022 respectively.

In addition, the Private Training Establishment Registration Rules 2022 require registered private training establishments to undertake self-assessment and participate in external evaluation and review as a condition of maintaining registration.

NZQA is responsible for ensuring non-university TEOs continue to comply with the rules after the initial granting of approval and accreditation of programmes, micro-credentials and consents to assess and registration. 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 Quality Assurance (including External Evaluation and Review (EER)) Rules 2022. 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). All rules cited above are available at <https://www.nzqa.govt.nz/about-us/our-role/legislation/nzqa-rules/>, while information about the conduct and methodology for external evaluation and review can be found at <https://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers-partners/external-evaluation-and-review/>.

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