

# Report of External Evaluation and Review

North Shore Helicopter Training  
Limited

Highly Confident in educational performance

Confident in capability in self-assessment

Date of report: 16 December 2014

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*Final Report*

# 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.*

## Introduction

### 1. TEO in context

Name of TEO:	North Shore Helicopter Training Limited (NSHT)
Type:	Private training establishment (PTE)
Location:	North Shore Aerodrome, 300 Postman Road, Dairy Flat, Auckland
Delivery sites:	Head office, hangar and training centre as above; no other training sites
First registered:	30 January 2012
Courses currently delivered:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• New Zealand Diploma in Aviation (Aeroplane and Helicopter) (General Aviation) (Level 5)</li><li>• New Zealand Diploma in Aviation (Aeroplane and Helicopter) (Flight Instruction) (Level 6)</li></ul>
	<p>Although NSHT is approved to offer the New Zealand Diploma in Aviation, to date the PTE has only one student enrolled in the diploma and no graduates. All other students enrol at NSHT with the intention of completing their Private Pilot Licence (PPL), Commercial Pilot Licence (CPL), Instructor or Specialist Ratings.</p>
Code of Practice signatory:	Not currently a signatory but intending to apply in the next few months.
Number of students:	Domestic: 13 (all part-time and self-funded) International: nil

NSHT students are entirely self-funded, therefore there is a limited number of potential students who have sufficient resources to undertake the training. For this reason, like most other aviation providers, NSHT has found it challenging if not impossible to enrol a student cohort that accurately reflects the New Zealand demographic.

Number of staff:	One full-time and four part-time
Scope of active accreditation:	Domains and unit standards in Aviation up to, and including, level 6
Distinctive characteristics:	NSHT is physically located alongside North Shore Aero Club (NSAC) at the North Shore Aerodrome. The two organisations collaborate on a daily basis by sharing training facilities, using the same student management system, sharing some staff, and generally working together. The two organisations underwent EER in the same week – the same EER team reviewed each organisation separately on consecutive days.
Recent significant changes:	N/A
Previous quality assurance history:	Although operational for at least 20 years, NSHT was first registered as a PTE in 2012. This is the PTE's first external evaluation and review (EER).  NZQA has not noted any risk issues since the organisation was registered.
Other	The certification and operation of organisations conducting aviation training and assessments in New Zealand is prescribed under Part 141 of Civil Aviation Rules governed by the Civil Aviation Authority of New Zealand (CAA). All theory and practical (flight test) assessments are conducted independently by either CAA flight examiners or Aviation Services Ltd, which operates under licence to CAA. All pilot licences are issued by CAA.  NSHT was last audited against Part 141 (Flight Training Operations) by CAA in September 2014. There were no findings raised during this audit and Part 141 approval has been renewed for five years, which is the longest renewal period that

CAA will approve.

## 2. Scope of external evaluation and review

The scope for the EER consisted of the mandatory focus area:

- Governance, management and strategy

In addition, the following focus area was selected:

- New Zealand Diploma in Aviation (Level 6) including all levels and strands delivered by NSHT

The above focus area encapsulates all of the teaching and programme delivery activities of NSHT. The New Zealand Diploma in Aviation provides flight training up to a Commercial Pilot Licence with an optional Instrument Rating. In the second year of their training NSHT students have two options:

- General aviation – including instrument training, dangerous goods, turbine and air operations
- Instructor – including the qualification required to become a C-Category Flight Instructor.

As all students are taught through individual learning plans within a single cohort, it was considered appropriate to include all activities in the scope.

## 3. Conduct of external evaluation and review

*All external evaluation and reviews are conducted in accordance with NZQA's published policies and procedures. The methodology used is described fully in the web document Policy and Guidelines for the Conduct of External Evaluation and Review available at: <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers-partners/registration-and-accreditation/external-evaluation-and-review/policy-and-guidelines-eer/introduction>. 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.*

The EER was conducted in early October 2014. Prior to this EER, the lead evaluator discussed the visit by telephone and email with the chief flying instructor/owner. The EER visit took place over one full day, where the evaluation team, consisting of two evaluators, reviewed a range of documentation and met with the owner/chief flying instructor, quality manager, one instructor and three students. Phone conversations were conducted with a number of students, graduates and external stakeholders.

# Summary of Results

## Statement of confidence on educational performance

NZQA is **Highly Confident** in the educational performance of **North Shore Helicopter Training Limited**.

The reasons for this include:

- The students who have studied at NSHT have achieved excellent results. Although first registered as a PTE in 2012, NSHT has been training helicopter pilots for at least the past 10 years. In the period 2004 to 2014, NSHT has enrolled 96 students, 95 per cent of whom have successfully completed a PPL, CPL and/or more advanced aviation qualification. Although the PTE's registered status is relatively new, the processes and systems to support training that have been put in place are systematic, robust and embedded, and are therefore expected to continue to produce good outcomes.
- For those students who are undertaking the qualifications for career reasons, NSHT provides excellent guidance and preparation for employment in the aviation industry. This is borne out by the fact that 93 per cent of NSHT's CPL graduates since 2004 are employed and continue to work within the aviation industry, both in New Zealand and overseas.
- NSHT is strongly customer focused and driven by the belief that students must receive value from their experience and their qualification. NSHT is in regular contact with its graduates and their employers, and the achievement results and stakeholder feedback indicate that the organisation is preparing students well for employment in the aviation industry or as private pilots. Ninety-two percent of graduates, either PPL or CPL, are still active pilots.
- Feedback from students and graduates indicates that NSHT programmes are delivered and assessed in a manner that enables them to understand and apply the material being presented. Although small, the organisation has a student support structure that is appropriate to the needs of its students. Students are very well supported pastorally, academically and vocationally.
- The evidence shows that the organisation is well governed and managed, engages and collaborates well with its profession and industries, is providing quality training, and is valued for the positive contribution it makes.

## Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **Confident** in the capability in self-assessment of **North Shore Helicopter Training Limited**.

The reasons for this include:

- NSHT has established a very reflective organisation and a culture that encourages students, staff and stakeholders to discuss their performance and put forward ideas for improvement. Although only recently registered, the school is long term in its thinking and closely attuned to the needs of its students and the aviation industry. Student achievement is closely examined individually and NSHT has a strong focus on ensuring that all students achieve their goals.
- Self-assessment has been practised at NSHT since its inception, and there is evidence that self-assessment is taking place across the organisation. While processes to critically analyse contributing factors to student achievement and other quality improvements have in the past been largely informal and intuitive, since registration as a PTE NSHT has built structure and consistency into its self-assessment practices. Self-assessment is ongoing, authentic and transparent, and there is some good evidence of improved outcomes. The results of NSHT's self-assessment and improvements are borne out in the consistently high pass rates. However, the structures have not been tested beyond the current small size of the organisation.
- In collaboration with the North Shore Aero Club, NSHT has developed a useful student record system from which is produced a quarterly summary 'dashboard' that looks at student progress and achievement. This is one of the tools that informs regular discussion and assessment of ideas by staff for improving achievement.
- On the strength of self-assessment activity seen at NSHT, the evaluation team is confident that as self-assessment processes continue to be embedded at NSHT, and the organisation further engages with the key evaluation questions, significant and meaningful ongoing improvements will result.

# Findings<sup>1</sup>

## 1.1 How well do learners achieve?

The rating for performance in relation to this key evaluation question is **Excellent**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this key evaluation question is **Excellent**.

The students who have studied at NSHT have achieved excellent results. In the period 2004 to 2014, NSHT has enrolled 96 students, 95 per cent of whom have successfully completed a PPL, CPL and/or a more advanced aviation qualification.

NSHT, and many other aviation providers, see an important measure of the success of their training in the number or percentage of 'first attempt passes'<sup>2</sup> which can then be benchmarked against national averages of first time pass rates of all New Zealand aviation providers.<sup>3</sup> The NSHT first time pass rate for both private and commercial pilot licence tests is consistently above the national average. Of those who miss the first attempt, all NSHT students pass all exams on the second attempt.

	PPL	CPL	All
NSHT	90%	89%	90%
National average first time pass rate 2013/14	77%	72%	75%
NSHT student theory exam average grade	82%	83%	82%

Source: NSHT results records

Staff at NSHT demonstrate a solid understanding of the factors that lead to student achievement, and formally and informally analyse and discuss ideas for improving achievement. The instructors at NSHT and their neighbours at NSAC have a very collegial approach, so they communicate and share information informally on a daily basis. NSHT has a compulsory staff meeting every month where the progress

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<sup>1</sup> The findings in this report are derived using a standard process and are based on a targeted sample of the organisation's activities.

<sup>2</sup> This measure refers to the number or percentage of students who pass external theory or flight test examinations on the first attempt.

<sup>3</sup> ASL has recently made national average information available to all providers on a quarterly basis.

and achievement of students is the main topic of conversation. NSHT staff also participate in the weekly instructor toolbox meetings at NSAC, where teaching ideas and challenges are shared.

Students reported that they received timely, accurate and supportive feedback on their progress from NSHT staff. They are also debriefed by their instructor after every flight to identify what the student did well, what he/she did not do so well, and where improvements could be made, either in the student's performance or NSHT's instruction.

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

The rating for performance in relation to this key evaluation question is **Excellent**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this key evaluation question is **Good**.

NSHT CPL graduates are able to work as commercial helicopter pilots or flight instructors engaged in general aviation under the relevant CAA rules, or in the associated support industries of flight planning and scheduling. Ninety-three per cent of graduates who obtained a CPL at NSHT have achieved a job in the industry. Feedback from stakeholders indicates that NSHT pilots are well prepared for employment by the training environment, including the local topographical and climatic conditions, the level of air traffic at Whenuapai and Auckland airports, and exposure to local commercial operations.

NSHT staff take an active interest in, and feel responsible for, their graduates. For instance, when concerns arose around a graduate, the chief flying instructor went out of his way to contact the graduate to caution him regarding the incident and offer support and advice.

There is currently a global shortage of experienced helicopter pilots.<sup>4</sup> New Zealand, with 900 registered helicopters, has the largest helicopter fleet per capita in the world. NSHT is attuned to the valuable opportunities that this situation affords and actively seeks to place CPL graduates into work through the strong networks it has developed in the industry.

The C-Category Flight Instructor course also offered by NSHT gives graduates the opportunity to fly as an instructor, under the guidance of a senior and experienced instructor, to train new students to gain private and commercial licences. NSHT employs and mentors selected successful graduates for at least their first 100 hours of flight instruction and the six-month time period required by CAA. This

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<sup>4</sup> Helicopter Association Industries (HAI) conference March 2014 expressed serious concerns about the lack of trained pilots and instructors worldwide.

opportunity takes the new graduate to a further level in regard to hours flown, consolidating and gaining experience in their first role after graduation.

NSHT has made connections with international operators who are looking to New Zealand for expertise. For instance, in June 2014 the PTE delivered customer relationship management and threat and error management courses for a corporate helicopter operator in Indonesia. As a direct result, NSHT is now actively engaging with the Royal New Zealand Air Force to run similar courses for them within New Zealand. NSHT has also been contracted by a maritime training provider to offer a 'helicopter support' course for maritime students.

To supplement the informal feedback received since its inception, NSHT recently introduced a system for formal tracking and monitoring of graduates and managed to make contact with all of the graduates since 2004. Although the new system is commendable and has highlighted excellent employment outcomes, it is too early to see how it will be used to make improvements to outcomes as a result of graduate feedback.

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

The rating for performance in relation to this key evaluation question is **Excellent**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this key evaluation question is **Good**.

Evidence from stakeholders, including students, indicates that NSHT engages well with its sector and is valued for the contribution that it makes. NSHT management and staff have ongoing interaction with stakeholders, including regular contact with graduates, CAA and the rescue helicopter network. This means that the needs and expectations of stakeholders are understood.

The goals and aspirations of each student are individually identified at enrolment and an individual programme is tailored to suit. For instance, if a student particularly wishes to enter the tourism industry or charter work, instructors will, wherever possible, contextualise the training accordingly. The feedback from students was also that the organisation works actively to meet their different learning styles, and to provide flexibility around weather and work/life requirements. This makes them feel valued as a student and supports their learning. As previously discussed, the cost of training limits the demographics of students to those who can afford it. NSHT is in the early stages of discussion with local iwi to investigate ways of increasing the level of participation by Māori in helicopter training.

NSHT does not structure its 'ground school' in the same way as many other aviation schools, whereby students complete all of the theory study and examinations before they starting flying; rather, NSHT delivers its ground school concurrently with practical flight training. Management and staff have found that

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this structure not only motivates students, but most importantly enables students to apply the theory they learn immediately to a practical context and vice versa. Students have the choice of studying for their theory in a self-paced manner, by joining night classes run in conjunction with NSAC or attending a two-week intensive ground school also delivered in partnership with NSAC.

The organisation has worked hard over time to ensure that the teaching is closely related to the needs of the students. NSHT seeks feedback from learners through a variety of mechanisms such as formal feedback forms which are completed by students, normally once per month but dependent on the amount of flying the student has been doing. These are then analysed by the chief flying instructor and improvements made as appropriate. Staff members have an open-door policy and it is clear that students approach them with problems and issues.

Training at NSHT is enhanced by proximity to major controlled and uncontrolled airfields and airspace. North Shore and Whenuapai airfields are separated by only five minutes flight time, where a range of navigation aids are available. The training environment is further augmented through the topography of the region and the extensive forestry and confined area training on the edge of the airfield, which minimises transit times to training areas, therefore maximising in-air training time.

The flying programme is structured around the needs, abilities and resources of the students. As students 'pay as they go', NSHT has at times advised a student to stop their training for a period while they accumulated sufficient capital to enable them to engage in a concentrated block of training. This makes more effective use of flying time and maximises the learning experience.

#### 1.4 How effective is the teaching?

The rating for performance in relation to this key evaluation question is **Good**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this key evaluation question is **Good**.

There was clear evidence of good teaching practice taking place at NSHT, and a robust structure which will ensure good teaching continues as the organisation grows. All staff are enthusiastic and passionate about their teaching and are well supported by management. Instructors and students relate well to each other. The strong rapport between students and staff was evident from discussions and evaluation survey outcomes. Although a small sample, student feedback about the organisation and teaching was all positive. Students value the open, friendly style and find their learning activities interesting and challenging. Students have access to staff outside of formal classes and can make suggestions about improvements. Students noted that staff were responsive to any concerns or issues raised.

The organisation has a strong focus on, and commitment to, student achievement. Students are debriefed by their instructor after every flight to identify what the student did well, what he/she did not do so well, and where improvements could be

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made, either in the student's performance or the instructor's technique. The chief flying instructor regularly conducts interviews with students to review progress and gain feedback on the course.

Staff are well qualified, with extensive aviation experience and an obvious natural passion and ability to engage students. However, none of the current instruction staff holds an adult teaching qualification apart from the 'instructional techniques' component of the C-Category Flight Instructor course. The evaluation team believes that stronger policy and practice in this area, for instance sending instructors to various short courses on adult teaching<sup>5</sup>, would better demonstrate excellent practice.

Given that all summative assessment is through external examination, NSHT does not require a moderation system. The chief flying instructor does, however, closely monitor examination results from the external examinations provider ASL to identify trends, positive or negative, which may indicate good practice or areas for improvement.

## 1.5 How well are learners guided and supported?

The rating for performance in relation to this key evaluation question is **Excellent**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this key evaluation question is **Good**.

NSHT provides a high level of guidance and support for students, from the initial induction process, to ground and flight training, through to entry into the job market. The consistently high levels of student achievement and positive feedback from students confirms the effectiveness of the guidance and support strategies provided by NSHT and its staff.

The pre-enrolment information is comprehensive and designed to ensure that students make an informed decision before committing to what is a significant personal and financial investment. Students interviewed also appreciated that they could access pre- and post-flight briefings online.

NSHT has aspirations to grow its student numbers, particularly in international markets. Hence it is in the process of applying to NZQA to become a signatory to the Code of Practice for the Pastoral Care of International Students. Although the EER team saw evidence of excellent and effective student support at NSHT, the systems are yet to be tested with greater numbers of students. At that stage, NSHT will also need to be more systematic in its assessment of the effectiveness of student support.

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<sup>5</sup> For instance, courses and workshops offered in Auckland by Ako Aotearoa or adult teaching courses offered at tertiary institutions.

NSHT has detailed and sound procedures for resolving complaints. However, given the small size of the organisation, and the proactive, client-centred approach of the organisation, it was not surprising that there were no formal complaints on file.

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

The rating for performance in relation to this key evaluation question is **Excellent**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this key evaluation question is **Good**.

NSHT is a privately owned and operated aviation training provider with a clear set of goals and objectives which are articulated throughout the organisation. The organisation has developed and embedded very effective systems for monitoring student achievement and supporting staff to improve educational achievement. NSHT's management recognises that the key to success of the business lies in the success of the students and the value they gain from their training. NSHT actively supports strategies to maintain and increase student achievement and to support students to meet their employment goals.

NSHT has a sound understanding of its business. The management of NSHT is forward thinking in approach and this vision permeates the organisation, providing a very positive environment in which students and staff can work and study.

NSHT has employed and retained a small but well qualified and experienced group of staff and is investing in their ongoing development. Performance management systems are in place and staff are provided with regular feedback on their performance.

The small campus is amply supplied with aircraft and learning resources for the number of students that it currently has. The collaborative arrangements with NSAC give students access to facilities, learning resources and social opportunities that would otherwise not be possible. Effective resourcing is well planned and NSHT has well-developed strategies to build resources quickly should the number of students substantially increase.

Monitoring of performance within the organisation is regular, transparent and robust, and the organisation encourages opportunities for reflection on its role and how to continue to make ongoing and continuous improvements to meeting the needs of students and other stakeholders. Clearly, NSHT makes an effort to understand and continuously improve the educational performance of its programmes. However, the effects of this are difficult to ascertain due to the small scale of the training. As the training function in the organisation grows, the systematic analysis and action from self-assessment activities linked to the key evaluation questions will lead to worthwhile improvements.

## 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 **Excellent**.

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

### 2.2 Focus area: New Zealand Diploma in Aviation

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

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

# Recommendations

NZQA recommends that North Shore Helicopter Training:

- Continue work to increase Māori participation in aviation training through engagement with schools and Māori networks.
- Investigate and effect ongoing opportunities for instructors to further develop their teaching qualifications and practice.
- Invite the NZQA relationship manager to visit in 12 months' time, to provide feedback on progress with self-assessment processes, improvements and results.

# Appendix

## Regulatory basis for external evaluation and review

*External evaluation and review is conducted according to the External Evaluation and Review (EER) Rules 2013, which are made by NZQA under section 253 of the Education Act 1989 and approved by the NZQA Board and the Minister for Tertiary Education, Skills and Employment.*

*Self-assessment and participation in external evaluation and review are requirements for maintaining accreditation to provide an approved programme for all TEOs other than universities. The requirements are set through the NZQF Programme Approval and Accreditation Rules 2013, which are also made by NZQA under section 253 of the Education Act 1989 and approved by the NZQA Board and the Minister for Tertiary Education, Skills and Employment.*

*In addition, the Private Training Establishment Registration Rules 2013 require registered private training establishments to undertake self-assessment and participate in external evaluation and review, in accordance with the External Evaluation and Review Rules (EER) 2013, as a condition of maintaining registration. The Private Training Establishment Registration Rules 2013 are also made by NZQA under section 253 of the Education Act 1989 and approved by the NZQA Board and the Minister for Tertiary Education, Skills and Employment.*

*NZQA is responsible for ensuring non-university TEOs continue to comply with the rules after the initial granting of approval and accreditation of programmes and/or 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 External Evaluation and Review (EER) Rules 2013.*

*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](http://www.nzqa.govt.nz)).*

*The External Evaluation and Review (EER) Rules 2013 are available at <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/assets/About-us/Our-role/Rules/EER-Rules.pdf>, while information about the conduct and methodology for external evaluation and review can be found at <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers-partners/external-evaluation-and-review/policy-and-guidelines-eer/introduction/>.*

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