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External Evaluation and Review Report

Orbit Helicopters Limited (trading as
North Shore Helicopter Training)

Date of report: 17 January 2023

About Orbit Helicopters Limited trading as North Shore Helicopter Training

North Shore Helicopter Training (NSHT) is a private training establishment and part of CORE Aviation Limited¹, a general aviation company. NSHT delivers helicopter flight training to full-time diploma students and part-time, privately funded students. Students in the diploma programmes are eligible for student loan funding.

Type of organisation:	Private training establishment (PTE)
Location:	North Shore Airfield, Postman Road, Albany Auckland RD4
Code of Practice signatory:	Yes
Number of students:	Domestic: currently five full-time students International: no students
Number of staff:	Two full-time and six part-time
TEO profile:	See Orbit Helicopters Ltd ; a change of ownership occurred in 2019
Last EER outcome:	At the last EER in 2018, NZQA was Highly Confident in both the PTE's educational performance and capability in self-assessment.
Scope of evaluation:	New Zealand Diploma in Aviation (Helicopter) (General Aviation) (Level 5) (ID:114259 V2) [Ref: 3688-1]
MoE number:	7123
NZQA reference:	C50862
Dates of virtual EER:	1-3 November 2022

¹ Civil Aviation Authority of New Zealand (CAA) oversees Core Aviation Limited Part 135 (Air Operations), Part 141 (Aviation Training Organisation) and Part 145 (Aircraft Maintenance Organisation) certifications.

Summary of results

Competent leadership and staff support the operation of the small PTE. The new owners are navigating the current external environment that is affecting aviation, and is proactively working to address self-identified areas for improvement in its performance.

Confident in educational performance

- Most students gain Civil Aviation Authority New Zealand (CAA) licences and the New Zealand Diploma in Aviation (Helicopter). Processes to monitor and understand achievement are fit for purpose.
- NSHT is well connected to the aviation sector, adding value to the programme and student experience. Most graduates achieve aviation-related employment.

Confident in capability in self-assessment

- NSHT's programme is relevant for stakeholders and maintains currency and academic standards. Alignment of learning activities is evident in practical flying. There is opportunity for improvement in the theoretical teaching and learning activities.
- Students are effectively involved and supported in their flying instruction. However, instructors need to also take more of a leading role in supporting students with the theory components of the programme. Opportunities for student voice to be expressed and heard also need strengthening.
- The clear direction and educational performance of the PTE is sustained and supported through access to the larger business expertise and operations. Becoming as deeply familiar with the educational delivery dimension is still at an early stage.
- NSHT demonstrates effective management of its aviation compliance accountabilities. NZQA and education obligations are understood and are generally effective.

Key evaluation question findings²

1.1 How well do students achieve?

Performance:	Good
Self-assessment:	Good
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>Students from all learner groups, and notably Māori and female, are succeeding in gaining CAA licences (private and commercial pilot helicopter licences). Successfully gaining these licences entitles graduates to legally operate a helicopter in New Zealand for commercial purposes and leads to awarding of the New Zealand Diploma in Aviation (Helicopter).</p> <p>Twelve learners have enrolled in the New Zealand Diploma in Aviation (Helicopter) over the past four years, and eight have completed. The reasons for non-completion are well understood. Three of the four non-completions are attributed to the impact and restrictions placed on the Auckland-based PTE and students due to COVID-19 during 2020 and 2021.</p> <p>Progress is closely monitored and discussed by staff and individually with each student. The resulting interventions support achievement – first-time pass rates for CAA examinations and flight tests are high (88-100 per cent). Opportunities for more detailed understanding of achievement across all the programme components are not yet in place or well established. For example, internal and external benchmarking of data would provide a useful guide to improvements.</p>
Conclusion:	Most students gain CAA licences and the New Zealand Diploma in Aviation (Helicopter). Processes to monitor and understand achievement are fit for purpose.

² The findings in this report are derived using a standard process and are based on a targeted sample of the organisation's activities.

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

Performance:	Good
Self-assessment:	Good
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>NSHT has a sound and well-informed understanding of helicopter operations within New Zealand through membership of peak bodies and core aviation personnel having extensive experience in aviation.</p> <p>The campus location exposes students to New Zealand's varied terrain, and involves interaction with the Royal New Zealand Air Force and Auckland Airport control towers. In addition to developing flying skills, students gain a broader experience of aviation through exposure to wider aviation activities and personnel, for example commercial air operations, ground crew, engineering and maintenance. This adds value to the programme.</p> <p>Since the last EER, six of the eight graduates have progressed to employment in aviation roles. Three are in ground crew positions as they accumulate flying hours. Three have jobs flying, one is a commercial pilot, and another a C Category instructor.</p> <p>Core Aviation Group is also a key stakeholder of the PTE and is positioned well to employ graduates directly into a cadetship to support Core aviation operations. Equally, the graduate gains the experience and hours necessary to fly commercial operations or to instruct.</p> <p>The opportunity for the range of stakeholders and graduates to feed back into the programme – including developing networks to more directly support graduates to transition into the wider aviation industry – are not yet clearly evident. This leads to a recommendation by NZQA (see Recommendations).</p>
Conclusion:	NSHT is well connected to the aviation sector, adding value to the programme and student experience. Most graduates achieve aviation-related employment.

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

Performance:	Good
Self-assessment:	Good
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>The level 5 diploma programme meets all NZQA and CAA³ requirements. Programme delivery is structured, with a prescriptive syllabus, and assessments are conducted by CAA which NSHT adheres to. Suitably qualified instructors, comprehensive entry selection criteria, and ongoing instructor discussions with CAA's training division ensure CAA, and therefore industry, needs are met, and students are well matched to undertake study.</p> <p>Teaching and learning resources and activities replicate aviation practice standards. Assessments are designed and marked through CAA⁴ as per their rules, and external moderation requirements have been consistently met, validating achievement.</p> <p>Instructors have clear strategies and a structure to teach practical flying. However, the theory component involves self-study by students who work through texts independently. This mode of programme delivery requires some consideration by NSHT. That said, this is somewhat mitigated by the high rates of achievement and first-time pass rates.</p> <p>Monthly one-to-one meetings with students to review progress and goals are useful. Programme activities such as pre- and post-flight briefs and de-briefs, formative practice exams and daily engagement with the instructor show how well student needs are being met. NSHT needs an additional feedback mechanism to fully understand the student perspective on the programme and instructor performance (see 1.4).</p>
Conclusion:	NSHT's programme is relevant for stakeholders and maintains currency and academic standards. Alignment of learning

³ 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 CAA.

⁴ All theory assessments are conducted independently by ASPEQ, which operates under licence to CAA. Practical (flight test) assessments are conducted by qualified flight examiners as prescribed under CAA Part 61.

	activities is evident in practical flying. There is an opportunity for improvement in the theoretical teaching and learning activities.
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1.4 How effectively are students supported and involved in their learning?

Performance:	Marginal
Self-assessment:	Marginal
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>Students' primary relationships are with the instructors and the small team at NSHT, who also provide support for learners' wellbeing and learning. Study information, advice and feedback on progress are well provided. Instructors guide students in applying flight knowledge and skills in a logical sequence at the students' individual pace, based on need and each student's capability and confidence.</p> <p>Instructor input and guidance in the practical instruction and activities surrounding this component are highly valued by the students, and instructors' responses aid their learning. However, the theory-based component (see 1.3) requires students to self-identify issues. There is not sufficient oversight for NSHT to decide when the instructor ought to take on a more leading role to support students in their learning.</p> <p>The opportunity for students to give, and NSHT to receive, useful feedback is limited to direct in-person feedback to the instructor daily, and at the monthly progress review meetings. NSHT needs to respond to the challenge small PTEs face in gathering authentic feedback, and address this gap to ensure student voice is safely expressed and heard.</p> <p>Graduates and students told the evaluators they were happy with the facilities provided, and had the resources needed. There was some concern about fees and the additional costs required to complete their licences. Some also experience pressure managing the financial and time pressures of working and studying. Although the guidance given on these aspects, and the induction of new applicants is sound, this is an area which needs closer monitoring as it has wellbeing implications.</p>
Conclusion:	Students are effectively involved and supported in their flying instruction. However, instructors need to also take a leading role in supporting students with the theory components of the programme. Opportunities for student voice to be expressed and

	heard need strengthening.
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1.5 How effective are governance and management in supporting educational achievement?

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Good
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>NSHT underwent a change in ownership in 2019. The board and management are new to operating and managing a PTE. In addition to being a certified aviation training organisation, Core Aviation also undertakes air operations and aircraft maintenance. This change has enabled a more sustainable business model, aligned to training helicopter pilots. Significant investment and forward-looking improvements include extending the helicopter fleet and an improvement to the physical learning environment with a move to a large and modern classroom attached to a commercial hangar.</p> <p>Safety committee meetings and safety management systems include the activities of NSHT personnel and student activities, providing a strong level of scrutiny. Recently, formalising monthly management steering group meetings which review student progress and discuss flight and airfield operations ensures the educational achievement of students.</p> <p>At the time of the EER, NSHT recognised the need to employ another staff member to strengthen academic leadership and provide more extensive education oversight, to meet the academic demands of the PTE and the programme. This was in progress.</p> <p>NSHT has responded effectively to the changing environment and challenges impacting the PTE: restrictions on training and assessment during COVID-19; Tertiary Education Commission funding reduction due to under-delivery in 2020/2021; and a nationwide scarcity of experienced instructors.</p>
Conclusion:	The clear direction and educational performance of the PTE is sustained and supported through access to the larger business expertise and operations. Becoming as deeply familiar with the educational delivery dimension is still at an early stage.

1.6 How effectively are important compliance accountabilities managed?

Performance:	Good
Self-assessment:	Good
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>NSHT is attending to and meeting all aviation compliance obligations. CAA recertification establishes the competence and resources to operate safely and in compliance with prescribed standards (Part 141 Flight Training Operations). NSHT recertification approval was renewed in 2019 for five years and remains in force. Since 2019, NSHT has undergone flight training revisits by CAA which are triggered with a change in personnel or structure, and these visits confirm ongoing compliance.</p> <p>NSHT is aware of NZQA obligations and has a reasonably convincing and effective process within a small PTE to manage these. The change in ownership, attestations and required notifications have all occurred as required. Extensions for programme completion for students impacted by COVID-19 restrictions were timely and approved by NZQA. The Code of Practice⁵ self-review attestation has been submitted and an approach to identify and respond to differently abled students as a priority group is an intended focus in 2023.</p> <p>NSHT needs an increased focus on the quality management system, as education-related processes and policies are overdue for review; and the percentage of unit standard credits reported after the 90 days following the last date of assessment needs attention. NSHT has identified this and is actively addressing the root causes.</p>
Conclusion:	NSHT demonstrates effective management of its aviation compliance accountabilities. NZQA and education obligations are understood and generally effectively met.

⁵ The Education (Pastoral Care of Tertiary and International Learners) Code of Practice 2021

Focus areas

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

2.1 Focus area: New Zealand Diploma in Aviation (Helicopter) (General Aviation) (Level 5)

Performance:	Good
Self-assessment:	Good

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 Orbit Helicopters Limited trading as North Shore Helicopter Training:

- Establish a systematic approach to capturing and analysing outcomes (achievement and graduate outcomes) to determine benchmarks and guide improvements (1.1 and 1.2).
- Develop more systematic processes to receive authentic and safely expressed feedback from students on a regular cycle (1.4).
- Review the teaching approach for the theoretical component of the programme, using student and graduate feedback (1.3).
- Prioritise review of the education processes and policies within the quality management system (1.6).

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.

There are no requirements arising from the external evaluation and review.

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 2021, 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 including ITOs but excluding universities, and*
- maintaining training scheme approval for all TEOs other than universities.*

The requirements for participation and cooperation are set through the Programme Approval and Accreditation Rules 2021, the Consent to Assess Against Standards Rules 2021 and the Training Scheme Rules 2021 respectively.

In addition, the Private Training Establishment Registration Rules 2021 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, training schemes 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 2021. 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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