



Report of External Evaluation and Review

Southern Wings Ltd
Trading as Southern Wings

Highly Confident in educational performance

Highly Confident in capability in self-assessment

Date of report: 12 October 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.

Introduction

1. TEO in context

Location:	Invercargill Airport, Invercargill
Type:	Private training establishment
First registered:	1998
Number of students:	Domestic: 40 International: Nil
Number of staff:	Ten full-time equivalents
Scope of active accreditation:	Southern Wings is accredited to offer three local courses: Private Pilot (Fixed Wing) (PPL) Commercial Pilot (Fixed Wing) (CPL) Commercial Pilot (Helicopter)
Sites:	As above
Distinctive characteristics:	NA
Recent significant changes:	NA
Previous quality assurance history:	At the previous quality assurance visit by NZQA, an audit in 2008, Southern Wings met all the requirements of Quality Assurance Standard One, the standard then in force.
Other:	Southern Wings has a written agreement with the Southern Institute of Technology (SIT) to deliver the aviation components of the SIT Diploma in Aviation programme. Along with the aviation components the students must choose New Zealand Institute of

2. Scope of external evaluation and review

The external evaluation and review examined the following mandatory focus area:

- Governance, management, and strategy.

The second focus area chosen, flight training, encompasses the Private Pilot Licence (PPL), the Commercial Pilot Licence (CPL), both fixed-wing and rotary, and Instrument Rating.

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 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-eeer/introduction/>

The external evaluation and review team of two spent ten hours, over two days, on site at Southern Wings which is based at Invercargill Airport. During the visit the team met with key staff, including the general manager/chief flying instructor, the chief ground instructor, and the administration and quality assurance manager. A key contact at Southern Institute of Technology was interviewed, as were some instructors and students. While on site, the evaluation team viewed key documents, for example achievement data and the applications register.

Southern Wings Ltd trading as Southern Wings has had an opportunity to comment on the accuracy of this report, and any comments have been fully considered by NZQA before finalising the report.

Summary of Results

Statement of confidence on educational performance

NZQA is **Highly Confident** in the educational performance of **Southern Wings Ltd trading as Southern Wings**. The key reasons for this are:

- Southern Wings achieves consistently high achievement rates for flight training of about 83 percent, which benchmarks above the national average of 79 per cent.
- Southern Wing's pilots are valued throughout the country because of the range of experience of terrains and weather patterns they gather during their time based at Invercargill. Nearly 100 per cent of their helicopter pilots move straight to employment, as do upwards of 65 per cent of their fixed-wing pilots.
- Southern Wings is closely linked with the aviation industry. For example, either the chief pilot or the quality assurance manager attends the regular Aviation Industry Association meetings, where they were also involved in the development of the Aviation Industry Association Code of Practice. This engagement ensures the college has a good understanding of developments in the sector.
- The college is focused on matching learner needs, and a significant investment in a modern fleet of aircraft and a flight simulator is evidence of this.

Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **Highly Confident** in the capability in self-assessment of **Southern Wings Ltd trading as Southern Wings**. The key reasons for this are:

- Southern Wings monitors achievement closely at the flight training component level and the results are used to inform individual learning plans, instructors' teaching plans, and professional development.
- There are good mechanisms to ensure that useful feedback is gathered and analysed, and issues that arise are dealt with promptly and effectively.
- There is an authentic, robust internal review system which continuously monitors processes and practices for safety and effectiveness and ensures improvements are made and evaluated.
- There are clear goals and objectives set and reviewed for the organisation. The goals set for learner pass rates were set after analysis of achievement data, although a recent review of data against the goals had not occurred at the time of the external evaluation and review.

TEO response

Southern Wings has confirmed the factual accuracy of this report.

Findings¹

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 **Good**.

All flight training theory is externally assessed by Air Services Limited (ASL). Southern Wings' students achieve well against the ASL benchmark of 79 per cent of students passing the components of flight training on their first attempt. Currently, the Southern Wings pass rate is 83 per cent on the students' first attempt and this rate has been consistent over a number of years.

Southern Wings analyses the results of the ASL exams closely, monitoring the questions that are most difficult for the learners as well as the performance of each instructor in terms of helping students to achieve. Learners are supported to achieve at their own pace, with students only attempting assessment when they and their instructors are confident they are ready.

A key achievement that trainee pilots gain through their time at Southern Wings is the experience of flying in all terrain and weather conditions. This achievement is valued by the learners and the industry and adds value to the number of flying hours students accumulate during their time at the college.

Southern Wings monitors achievement closely at the flight training component level; a broader analysis of learner achievement across the years and between different cohorts is only done informally. For those students enrolled for longer than six months, Southern Wings has set a goal of a 90 per cent pass rate within two and a half years of enrolment. While a brief look at the data seems to confirm that the college has come close to this target, Southern Wings was not able to tell the evaluation team how well the school was tracking against this goal.

¹ 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 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**.

The claim that Southern Wings' pilots are valued throughout the country was validated by industry and graduates and is a consequence of the range of experience of terrains and weather patterns that they gather during their flight time with Southern Wings.

The employment rate for Southern Wings' pilots is high, with close to 100 per cent of those trained as helicopter pilots moving directly to employment. For the fixed-wing pilots, employment rates vary, and recently the industry has been affected by the economic recession. However, upwards of 65 per cent of those who complete their training with Southern Wings move into employment.

The Diploma in Aviation, offered in conjunction with SIT, is valued by those students who are aiming to be airline pilots. The most important prerequisite for flying for the airlines is the number of flight hours a pilot has accumulated. However, the diploma gives candidates an additional advantage. Most who enrol in the business papers with Southern Institute of Technology (SIT), intending on completing the diploma, do so successfully.

While there is a register to log students' achievement and employment outcomes, this was not up to date at the time of the visit. However, it was evident that some analysis of employment outcomes had occurred in the past.

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 **Excellent**.

Southern Wings is closely linked to the aviation industry and contributed to the development of the Aviation Industry Association Code of Practice for flying schools, which is now used as a standard for Southern Wings' operation. Currently, the chief pilot is engaged in consultation about future funding for flight training. Regular engagement ensures that the college has a good understanding of developments in the sector.

The college is focused on the needs of learners and recent investments have included upgraded planes and a flight simulator, which enhance the learning experience. The teaching resources have recently been reviewed and recommendations have resulted. Learners are given multiple opportunities to give feedback during reviews and routinely on their programme and there is good evidence that their feedback is responded to promptly and effectively.

A review of the admissions process has resulted in a clearer delineation of roles and responsibilities between SIT and Southern Wings, and better communication with potential students has resulted. All students are interviewed before being accepted into the

programme to ensure they have the motivation and capability to succeed and a good understanding of what the programme entails.

1.4 How effective is the teaching?

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**.

Learners attested to a favourable instructor/student ratio, well-qualified staff, and that “everything we study we will use in our career”. Good mechanisms exist for feedback between learners, between learners and their instructors, between learners and the senior staff, and between the instructors and the senior staff. This feedback ensures learners know how well they are achieving and what they need to do next to move ahead.

Senior staff closely monitor less experienced instructors, with a formalised system of induction into teaching which includes flight instructor training, observation and team teaching, and close monitoring of achievement results and learner feedback. Most instructors are newly qualified pilots, graduates from the college, and therefore relate well to the learners, acting in a mentoring role to support them through their training.

Formative assessment is used effectively to prepare learners for the external assessments. Students attested to the helpfulness of the feedback from instructors in preparation for assessments. Close analysis of achievement results is used to inform instructors’ teaching plans and professional development.

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 **Excellent**.

Learner achievement is at the centre of Southern Wings’ activities. Regular Monday morning meetings are used to reflect on the previous week and to gauge learners’ progress and to plan the week according to the theory and practice being taught and the learners who need extra tutorial time. It is expected that every learner will move at their own pace, which requires one-to-one support for some learners at times.

A review of the application and enrolment process has ensured that all learners have a good understanding of what the programme entails, the high cost, and workload expectations. All learners set goals on entry which are regularly reviewed through their programme. Not every applicant is accepted; in 2010 over half were counselled out of applying. The college maintains regular contact with successful applicants before the start of the programme to ensure smooth transition/induction into the training programme. The improved process has resulted in fewer students not showing up, and fewer withdrawing.

In response to the poor achievement of a few learners, the course structure has been revised so that the first course taken is the theory component of the PPL. Exposing learners to this

learning immediately on entry ensures that those who do not have the motivation or capability for study discover this before they have committed large sums of money to the programme.

Links with SIT ensure that students who have personal issues can be referred to the pastoral care facilities available at that institution.

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 **Excellent**.

While the evaluation team did not meet with the board of directors, there was good evidence of its effective oversight of Southern Wings. There is a clear separation between governance and management, with the board focused on the financial stability of the organisation, planning and strategy, and ensuring the necessary resources are available to meet strategic goals.

There is excellent management of the college, with roles and responsibilities clearly delineated and open lines of communication. The performance management system is used to clarify staff goals and expectations and to monitor progress. For senior staff, this is more of a professional conversation to ensure that their work at Southern Wings is meeting their needs.

There is an authentic, robust internal review system which continuously monitors processes and practices for safety and effectiveness and ensures improvements are made. The quality assurance system runs across all operations of the business, including flying, and is structured to suit the business and meet the requirements of the Civil Aviation Authority and other external agencies that regularly audit the college's activities. Attention to safety and a lack of complacency are evident and articulated by managers, instructors, and students.

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 **Excellent**.

2.2 Focus area: Flight Training

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

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

Further actions

The next external evaluation and review will take place in accordance with NZQA's policy and is likely to occur within four years of the date of this report.

Appendix

Regulatory 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 (ITP Quality) 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).

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/providers-partners/registration-and-accreditation/external-evaluation-and-review/policy-and-guidelines-eer/introduction/>

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