

# 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: 23 September 2014

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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

Name of TEO:	Southern Wings Ltd trading as Southern Wings
Type:	Private training establishment (PTE)
Location:	Airport, Invercargill
Delivery sites:	Additional site at Ardmore Airport, Auckland, opened July 2014
First registered:	19 June 1998
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><li>• New Zealand Diploma in Aviation (Airline Preparation) (Level 6)</li></ul>
Code of Practice signatory?	Southern Wings is a signatory to the Code of Practice but does not currently have international students enrolled.
Number of students:	Domestic: 30 equivalent full-time students International: nil
Number of staff:	Five full-time and four part-time instruction staff Two full-time administration staff
Scope of active accreditation:	Domains and unit standards in Aviation up to and including level 6
Distinctive characteristics:	Southern Wings is one of five flying schools in New Zealand chosen by Air New Zealand (AirNZ)

as Flying Training Organisation partners.

Recent significant changes: Southern Wings was, for several years, offering the Southern Institute of Technology Diploma in Aviation (Level 6) under a partnership arrangement. This partnership ceased at the end of 2011, at which time Southern Wings became directly funded by the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC). All students enrolled at that time completed the Southern Institute of Technology diploma, and Southern Wings began offering the New Zealand Diploma in Aviation from 2012.

Along with direct TEC funding in 2012 came changes to the rules governing student loans for study towards aviation qualifications. All students are now required to personally fund approximately \$30,000 of the cost. While Southern Wings and other aviation providers acknowledge that the change has resulted in self-selection by the more committed students, it has also led to exclusion of some students who lack sufficient resources. Providers have found it challenging, if not impossible, to enrol a student cohort that accurately reflects the New Zealand demographic.

Southern Wings established a satellite campus at Ardmore Airport, Auckland in July 2014. The change has been approved by the TEC, NZQA and AirNZ. Southern Wings is the only AirNZ Flying Training Organisation partner offering training in the upper North Island.

Previous quality assurance history: This is Southern Wings' second scheduled external evaluation and review (EER). The first EER was conducted in July 2010, at which time NZQA was Highly Confident in Southern Wings' educational performance and Highly Confident in its capability in self-assessment. NZQA has not noted any risk issues since the last EER.

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 Aviation Services Ltd, which operates under licence to CAA. All pilot licences are issued by CAA.

Southern Wings was last audited against Part 141 (Flight Training Operations) and Part 119/135 (Flight Operations) by CAA in March 2013. There were no findings raised during this audit.

Southern Wings was also audited by AirNZ flight operations and safety in August 2013 as a condition of their Flying Training Organisation partnership. The audit raised no significant findings and described Southern Wings as 'a valuable and robust member of the FTO team'.

## 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, including all levels and strands delivered by Southern Wings

The above focus area encapsulates all of the teaching and programme delivery activities of Southern Wings. The New Zealand Diploma in Aviation (Level 6) provides flight training up to a Commercial Pilot Licence with an Instrument Rating. In the second year of their training, Southern Wings' students are split into three streams:

- General aviation stream – including GPS navigation, dangerous goods, air operations and aerobatic flight.
- Airline preparation stream – including the Airline Transport Pilot Licence theory examinations and a component in the Multi Crew environment.
- Instructor stream – including the qualification required to become a Category C Flight Instructor.

As students from the three streams 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 late July 2014. Prior to the EER, the lead evaluator discussed the visit by telephone and email with the chief executive of Southern Wings. The lead evaluator visited the Ardmore campus followed by a one and a half day visit to the Southern Wings site at Invercargill airport, where the evaluation team, consisting of two evaluators, reviewed a range of documentation and met with the chief executive/chief flying instructor, ground training manager/deputy chief flying instructor, quality manager, student support coordinator, instructors, students and Southern Wings board. A number of external stakeholders were contacted by telephone.

# Summary of Results

## Statement of confidence on educational performance

NZQA is **Highly Confident** in the educational performance of **Southern Wings Ltd.**

The reasons for this include:

- Students at Southern Wings are achieving excellent results (see Findings 1.1 for details). Since Southern Wings began delivering the New Zealand Diploma in Aviation in 2012, only one student has withdrawn. The other 19 students have either successfully completed the diploma or are still actively engaged in their study and are on track to pass the qualification.
- The organisation has a strong employment focus, and is driven by the belief that students must receive good value from their experience and their qualification. Ninety per cent of graduates from the last three years of Southern Wings' programmes are now working in the aviation industry (refer Findings 1.2). Feedback resulting from the regular contact that Southern Wings' staff have with their graduates indicates that the courses are doing an exceptionally good job of preparing students for employment in the aviation industry.
- Southern Wings' staff engage well with the aviation industry and profession at all levels and are valued for the positive contribution they make. The selection of the PTE as one of five AirNZ Flying Training Organisation partners is testimony to the quality and value of the training.
- The EER team found consistent evidence of good teaching throughout the organisation (refer Findings 1.4.) Feedback from students indicates that they value the way in which Southern Wings structures and deliver its programmes.
- Southern Wings has excellent student support structures which are appropriate to the needs of the students and contribute to the high and sustained levels of achievement (refer Findings 1.5).
- The organisation is well managed and has a clear philosophy and purpose that is reflected in its operations. The training is well resourced and Southern Wings uses its resources effectively. Southern Wings' board and management are a professional and cohesive team that display a clear understanding of their role and their respective responsibilities, both to the aviation industry and to the students.

## Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **Highly Confident** in the capability in self-assessment of **Southern Wings Ltd.**

The reasons for this include:

- Southern Wings has established a highly reflective organisation and a culture that encourages students, staff and external stakeholders to discuss their performance and put forward ideas for improvement. This information is then systematically used to make organisational improvements as well as to inform course structure, content and delivery. These improvements ultimately result in improved outcomes for students. Staff and management are closely attuned to the needs of the students and the aviation profession.
- Records indicate that self-assessment is well embedded and has been practised consistently since the last EER. The organisation has followed through on opportunities for improvement identified in the last EER.
- Southern Wings has comprehensive systems to gather and collate feedback from learners and industry organisations. The quality and validity of the information collected is sound and is used to inform improvements to course design and delivery.
- Southern Wings has established a satellite campus in Auckland in response to identified demand for a Flying Training Organisation partnership provider in the north. Although this is a significant step for the organisation, it has been carefully planned and implemented and will be regularly reviewed.
- Southern Wings has effectively capitalised on quality assurance audits and reviews by external professional bodies such as CAA and AirNZ to review the effectiveness of Southern Wings' activities. There is evidence that the organisation has then acted on recommendations from the reviews. The linkages with AirNZ and the other four members of the Flying Training Organisation partnership group have been used effectively as an opportunity to build organisational capability.
- Self-assessment at Southern Wings is ongoing, authentic and transparent, and it leads to worthwhile improvement.

# 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 Southern Wings have achieved excellent results in the completion of courses and examinations. Since 2012, 19 of the 20 students who have enrolled in the New Zealand Diploma in Aviation have either successfully completed their diploma or are still actively involved in their study at Southern Wings. Eighteen of the 20 graduates since 2012 are now in aviation-related employment.

Southern Wings, and many other aviation providers, see the number or percentage of 'first-attempt passes'<sup>2</sup> as an important measure of success, which can be benchmarked against national averages of first-time pass rates of all New Zealand aviation providers.<sup>3</sup> Southern Wings' first-time pass rates for Commercial Pilot Licence theory and flight tests are consistently above the national average (see Tables 1 and 2).

	2012	2013	2014
National average	79%	79%	82%
Southern Wings	94%	84%	97%

	2012	2013	2014 <sup>4</sup>
National average	63%	63%	47%
Southern Wings	86%	72%	67%

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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> Aviation Services Ltd has recently made national average information available to all providers on a quarterly basis.

<sup>4</sup> 2014 figures are for the first quarter and may represent a small number of actual students. For instance, the Southern Wings' 2014 figure represents three students, two of whom passed.

So far, the cohort of students who enrolled in 2014 have a 100 per cent first-time pass rate for the Private Pilot Licence and Commercial Pilot Licence theory and flight tests they have attempted.

Southern Wings currently has no Māori or Pasifika students enrolled. The PTE attributes this to the demographic of the Southland catchment area. In line with commitments to the TEC, the organisation is in the early stages of developing strategies to improve the participation of Māori and Pasifika students, and the move to Auckland is seen as providing more opportunities to achieve these strategies. However, as discussed in the introduction to this report, the changes to student loan regulations and the significant financial contribution now required from students has made it very difficult to recruit students from low-decile circumstances. This demographic unfortunately includes many young Māori and Pasifika who might otherwise aspire to become career pilots.

Staff at Southern Wings demonstrated a good understanding of the factors that lead to student achievement, and formally and informally analyse and discuss ideas for improving achievement. The instructors have a very collegial approach and all share the same office space, so they communicate and share information informally on a daily basis. Southern Wings also has a compulsory staff meeting every week where the progress and achievement of students is the main topic of conversation. Staff based at the Auckland site attend these weekly meetings via Skype technology.

## 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 immediate outputs from this training, in addition to the New Zealand Diploma in Aviation, are licences and ratings as awarded by CAA. All students are undertaking this training in preparation for a career in commercial aviation. Southern Wings ensures that the study period is as efficient as possible to enable students to complete in the minimum time while still ensuring they meet all requirements.

As mentioned, 18 of the 20 graduates since 2012 are now in aviation-related employment, the majority of which is 'in the cockpit'. Of the two graduates not working in the industry, one has been temporarily excluded from flying due to an unforeseen medical development after graduation. The other changed his career aspirations and is now employed in another sector. It is notable that Southern Wings staff met with this graduate to ask the question, 'Is there anything we could

have done at interview to have helped you identify this change in career earlier?' Southern Wings staff used the opportunity to reflect and learn from this situation.

The excellent level of graduate employment is a result of the focus that Southern Wings has put on preparing graduates for the aviation workforce. Southern Wings considers that the merit of the programme lies not only in the long-term professional outcomes for students but also in attributes such as the professionalism, confidence and positive attitudes they acquire on the courses. To this end, in collaboration with the other Flying Training Organisation partners and AirNZ, Southern Wings has identified a list of about 20 important graduate attributes such as: communication, integrity, demeanour, collegiality, discretion, accountability, professionalism, judgement, etc, and has developed a series of indicators for each. These indicators are then used to inform strategies to teach these key attributes. Feedback from the industry is that these attributes are evident in Southern Wings' graduates and are highly valued by employers.

Southern Wings has established an internship programme whereby graduates and students who are close to graduation have the opportunity to be placed with a third-tier airline to gain further experience. Although most internships are predominantly ground-based, they still help the intern to establish a potential employment pathway. The internship programme has not been extensively used because the majority of graduates already have an employment destination identified. However, for those students who have taken them up, internships have proved valuable in that they have resulted in employment with the intern provider or with another employer introduced through the network.

Southern Wings knows the immediate destination of all graduates and communicates with them regularly through a variety of media, both formal and informal. The information that Southern Wings gains from this engagement is gathered and discussed. As the organisation expands, especially at its Auckland base, there will be a need for greater systematisation and analysis of this engagement.

### 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' regular and ongoing interaction with stakeholders is a stand-out feature of this organisation. Southern Wings' courses are structured to offer three New Zealand diplomas and various CAA licences to students, depending on the identified needs and aspirations of the students and the employment opportunities identified. All three New Zealand diplomas have been developed and endorsed by the aviation industry.

The overall delivery structure of the New Zealand Diploma in Aviation programme at Southern Wings is designed to enable students, once they have completed the majority of the Private Pilot Licence theory, to complete the remaining theory component of the qualification simultaneously with their practical flying. After trying several combinations of theory and practice, Southern Wings reports that it has adopted this structure because it engages students well and enables them to immediately apply the theory learned to practical application. Students interviewed commented that they liked the mix of theory and practice, and that they found that it motivated them, and the practice enabled them to better understand the theory.

Southern Wings has developed other unique and valuable additions to the curriculum, such as mountain flying, which the PTE is ideally located to provide. Another activity is a bush survival course which involves students having to survive overnight in the bush with only the safety/survival equipment that would be available in an aircraft. Southern Wings has found that the bush survival course not only gives students some valuable survival skills which may one day save lives, but also helps to develop some of those key character attributes discussed earlier.

Southern Wings has a number of instructors available and generally seeks to ensure that instructors are matched to the learning styles of individual students. The systematic approach by the teaching staff to meeting the individual, personal and academic goals of every student is a strong feature of the organisation.

Student evaluations are conducted to a regular schedule and gather students' feedback on their experiences of different aspects of the programmes, including programme content and delivery, facilities and staff effectiveness. The information is then used to bring about useful improvements to teaching and programme design.

Southern Wings' selection as a Flying Training Organisation partner, and subsequent involvement with the partnership group, informs the PTE's practice and has assisted them to develop and maintain a high standard of training. Involvement with other outside organisations such as Aviation Services Ltd, CAA, and the Aviation Industry Association also provides valuable feedback on the aviation industry which the PTE uses to continually improve the content and delivery of the training.

#### 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 Southern Wings. All staff are enthusiastic and passionate about the curriculum and teaching and they 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. Students value the open, friendly teaching style and find their learning activities interesting and challenging. Students have access to all staff outside of formal classes and can make suggestions about improvements. Students noted that staff were responsive to any concerns or issues raised. Every staff member at Southern Wings has a role in student learning, and staff take a collegial, whole-of-organisation approach to ensuring that all students achieve.

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

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

The organisation has robust selection and induction processes for new instructors which include observations and team teaching. The performance of the teaching staff is formally reviewed on an annual basis, but this does not preclude regular and ongoing feedback of a formative nature. Teaching staff spoke about how they share ideas, experiences and knowledge through their daily interactions. Weekly formalised staff meetings are held, where much of the discussion is centred on teaching practice, which helps to support instructors and generate ideas to continuously improve teaching.

Given that all summative assessment is through external examination, Southern Wings does not require a moderation system. The chief executive officer does, however, closely monitor examination results and match these results with the various instructors to identify trends, positive or negative, to indicate good practice or areas for improvement.

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<sup>5</sup> Adult teaching courses and workshops are offered in Southland or Otago by Ako Aotearoa, or by Southern Institute of Technology.

## 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**.

Southern Wings' commitment to first-rate training ensures that a high level of guidance and support is provided to students, from the recruitment and selection 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 Southern Wings and staff.

Southern Wings has robust and client-friendly systems that provide excellent pastoral care for its students, which in turn has led to the high and sustained achievement levels. The organisation is providing a safe and supportive learning environment for its students and is in close contact outside of the normal hours of tuition. The small numbers of students and the family atmosphere means that they are given close individual support and guidance.

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. The organisation has tried and tested support systems at its main base, and the intention to replicate these at the Auckland base. Given that many of the current support systems are centred on personal relationships and networks, this will require ongoing attention.

Southern Wings has detailed and sound procedures for resolving complaints. Feedback from students was that any complaint or feedback was addressed promptly and appropriately.

## 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**.

Southern Wings has a clear set of goals and objectives which are clearly reflected in the PTE's processes. The organisation has developed and embedded effective systems for monitoring student achievement and supporting staff to improve educational achievements.

Southern Wings' management and governance recognise that the key to success of the business lies in the success of the students and the value they gain from the training. Southern Wings actively implements successful strategies to increase student achievement and to support students to meet their employment goals.

There are systems in place to monitor resourcing to ensure there are always sufficient resources, mainly aircraft and instructors, to meet the needs of the students. The organisation is making very good use of communication technology to cost-effectively engage with, and encourage day-to-day participation by, Auckland-based staff in all aspects of the organisation.

Staff obviously enjoy the environment and are valued by the organisation. Management was open in appreciation of the efforts, loyalty and dedication of staff. Staff members were equally appreciative of the leadership demonstrated by management.

Monitoring of performance at all levels of the organisation is regular, transparent and open. It is evident that this monitoring, while often challenging, is always supportive and focused on providing the best possible outcomes for students and the aviation industry. Self-assessment is being well led by management and is comprehensively understood and adopted throughout the organisation. The organisation enthusiastically encourages opportunities for reflection on its role and how to better meet stakeholder needs. This has led to a highly reflective environment and culture throughout.

## 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: 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 Southern Wings:

- Continue to work to improve Māori participation and achievement through engagement with schools and Māori networks.
- Implement the PTE's strategy to improve Pasifika participation and achievement through engagement with Pasifika networks in Auckland.
- Investigate and effect ongoing opportunities for instructors to further develop their teaching qualifications and practice.

# 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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