



Report of External Evaluation and Review

Waikato Aero Club (Inc)

Date of report: 22 June 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.

Brief description of TEO

Location: Steele Road, Hamilton Airport
Type: Private training establishment (PTE)
Size: 20 equivalent full-time students (EFTS)
Sites: As above

Waikato Aero Club (WAC) was established in 1932 to train air pilots. WAC is a not-for-profit organisation run by a small committee selected from its membership base of 350 members who own the club.

WAC has an agreement with Nelson Marlborough Institute of Technology (NMIT) to provide training and support for students enrolled in the Diploma in Aviation Science (Management) (Aeroplane). The diploma consists of practical and theory papers for the Private Pilot Licence (PPL), the Commercial Pilot Licence (CPL), and Instrument Flight Rating (IFR), as well as four elective papers in business management or aviation management. Students enrol with another training provider to complete the elective papers extramurally, with student support provided by WAC.

Students have several career training options available to them as part of the Diploma in Aviation Science. Students may choose to complete the instructor rating or work towards an Airline Transport Pilot Licence (ATPL) alongside study towards the CPL. The ATPL is required to work as a captain for a major airline.

Diploma outcomes are reported to NMIT as part of its agreement and for ongoing funding information requirements.

Students enrolled in the diploma qualify for student loans and allowances. The IFR is a compulsory flying component for all students. Students must pass Aviation Service Limited (ASL) external examinations throughout the course to achieve the PPL and CPL. Duration of training depends on the rate of progress with theory papers and the available practical flying time. The majority of students achieve a PPL or CPL and gain employment.

Executive Summary

Statement of confidence on educational performance

NZQA is **Highly Confident** in the educational performance of **Waikato Aero Club (Inc)**.

Waikato Aero Club (WAC) has a high success rate of students completing the Diploma in Aviation Science in comparison with other flight training providers offering this qualification. Around 50 per cent of students who enrolled in 2008 are expected to complete the programme in 2010. Previously, the overall achievement rate for the diploma has averaged 6.8 per cent per year since the programme was first offered in 2003. The higher expected achievement rates are attributed to the implementation of better selection and programming improvements from 2008.

Regardless of whether students complete a diploma, the results show that a high number of students achieve a Private Pilot Licence (PPL), Commercial Pilot Licence (CPL), and/or an Instrument Flight Rating (IFR) while enrolled with WAC.

There is also strong evidence collected by the organisation for the previous seven years showing that WAC students gain employment in the industry soon after completion of the CPL and/or IFR. WAC also encourages students to complete training towards the Flight Instructor Rating, which is an endorsement to the CPL and makes them employable as instructors after they have completed training. This enables graduates to build up their practical flying hours to enable them to apply for positions as pilots with larger commercial airlines.

The organisation has aligned its programme to meet industry needs and the needs of students. Students are taught in small classes and have support to complete the remaining theory papers towards the Diploma in Aviation Science while continuing with their practical flying training.

The organisation has strong input and guidance from its governance team. The organisation is proactive in meeting industry needs and carries out regular reviews to ensure the programme is meeting the needs of all stakeholders.

Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **Highly Confident** in the capability in self-assessment of **Waikato Aero Club (Inc)**.

WAC is systematic in reviewing its course content to ensure it is aligned to industry standards set by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA). The management team reviews the examination results to ensure that the training is aligned to CAA requirements and that students are receiving appropriate training. Each flight instructor has an opportunity to view their own performance as well as students' performance in order to make improvements or amendments to the training delivery or content as applicable.

Students' practical flight training is tracked individually so that each tutor is aware of the students' training needs. Students also retain a record of flight hours so they can build up experience to meet the various stages of the practical flight requirements of the PPL, CPL, or IFR.

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 (ITPQuality) 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).

Findings

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

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/for-providers/keydocs/index.html>

Outline of scope

The agreed scope of the external evaluation and review of WAC included the following mandatory focus area:

- Governance, management, and strategy.

The following focus area was selected in consultation with WAC because the organisation was interested in the effects of changes made to the training over the past 18 months and whether this had led to improved outcomes:

- Diploma in Aviation Science (Management) (Aeroplane).

The diploma also incorporates the PPL, CPL, and IFR courses.

Part 1: Answers to Key Evaluation Questions across the organisation

This section provides a picture of the TEO's performance in terms of the outcomes achieved and the key contributing processes. Performance judgements are based on the answers to key evaluation questions across the focus areas sampled. This section also provides a judgement about the extent to which the organisation uses self-assessment information to understand its own performance and bring about improvements, i.e. capability in self-assessment.

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**.

Context

WAC is responsible for providing the PPL, CPL, and IFR training components towards the Diploma in Aviation Science. It is not responsible for the training provided for the four elective papers that students enrol in extramurally. However, it is responsible for the guidance and support of students enrolled in those papers.

Explanation

Between 2002 and 2009 WAC trained 73 students, of whom 34 have gained employment in the industry, five have completed the diploma, and 44 have completed the CPL. The average completion rate for the diploma for this period was 6.8 per cent, which is higher than the 3 per cent national average.

The organisation identified that the completion rate was low due to a high number of students leaving to work in the aviation industry once they had completed their CPL and before they had completed the required papers towards the diploma. This was because industry is willing to employ students with the PPL, CPL, or IFR without the diploma, leading to low student motivation to complete the extramural papers required to achieve the diploma.

In 2008 WAC implemented a number of changes to its selection and programme information and structure in order to increase diploma completion rates. One of the changes made was to enrol students in their first extramural paper after the first semester, about six months into training. Once students pass all the theory examinations for the PPL, CPL, and IFR, they enrol in the remaining three extramural papers, usually after one year. This means that WAC has more direct contact time to guide students completing the extramural papers while they are still completing the practical flying requirements towards the PPL, CPL, and IFR. In addition, WAC has made attendance compulsory for students throughout the course. The expectation is that more students will graduate with a diploma after two years.

Already, the organisation has seen improvements as a result of these changes. Student feedback collected by the general manager at student meetings held twice a year show that the students currently enrolled in the diploma intend to complete. So far, WAC estimates that 50 per cent of the 2008 intake is on track to complete the diploma.

Overall results show that a high number of students enrolled in the diploma achieve a PPL or CPL. Students sit ASL examinations towards the PPL or CPL approximately every two weeks and students require a 70 per cent or better score to pass. Records kept of individual and class average pass rates show students sitting the external examination pass with marks above the minimum and usually at their first attempt. It is uncommon for WAC students to have to re-sit. However, if there is an increase in the number of re-sits, the organisation follows up with the tutor to see where they can improve the teaching.

The organisation does not record information on how well students achieve on the extramural diploma papers. However, it follows up to see if students are passing, and records show that the majority of students pass the papers they enrol in.

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 **Excellent**.

Context

The value of the diploma course is measured by qualification achievement, student feedback, and employment outcomes. Key stakeholders are the students, NMIT, small charter airlines, and major airline companies in New Zealand and internationally.

Having the diploma may help students when applying for jobs with the major airlines because they select people who have not only flying skills but also management skills, as this gives them more employment options if the person is unable to fly for any reason. However, major airlines only consider applicants with the diploma and 750 hours flying experience, and students only have around 350 hours flying experience when they complete a diploma. Most students initially find employment with a small charter company or as a flight instructor, which helps them to build up flying hours before they apply for major airline jobs.

Explanation

WAC has been training pilots since 1932, which shows a strong commitment to providing training to meet industry needs.

High employment outcomes for graduates from WAC, even during the current economic recession, show that the training is valued by industry. The organisation also confirms this through the ongoing communication received from employers, club members, and graduates indicating the value of the training for stakeholders.

Diploma outcomes prior to 2008 show that for some students the diploma was not highly valued. Achieving the diploma may help students gain employment in a higher-salaried position. However, airlines recruit for positions based on a number of factors and, as a general guideline, airlines usually employ people with a minimum of 1000 practical flying experience. WAC encourages diploma students to complete the flight instructor rating as part of their training so they can gain employment as flying instructors and use this to increase their flying hours once they have graduated. This helps students to build the required 1500 practical flying hours to obtain an ATPL. Most students choose the flight instructor rating option and WAC is one of the employers nationwide that employ graduates as flight instructors.

However, since 2008 the organisation has been promoting the strong connection between having a diploma and career advancement. In addition, WAC has improved its student selection processes to identify those who are committed to a career in aviation rather than as an interest course, and has enhanced student information so that students are clear about how to progress towards the diploma. Feedback from students currently enrolled indicates that this has led to more commitment to completing the diploma.

Staff work hard to find work for graduates through their contacts. This has resulted in a high number of graduates finding employment as transport pilots or for flying for sky

diving companies. Students are also employed by other training providers as flight instructors. Previous students have also been employed to fly for companies in Fiji and Papua New Guinea as well as in New Zealand.

WAC also has strong links to the community, is active in providing training for students on secondary school Gateway programmes, and offers open days to the public to increase awareness of flight training.

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**.

Context

The diploma programme consists of six months of theory towards a CPL (which includes a PPL, IFR and CPL theory). Students may also achieve a flight instructor endorsement to their licence. Students then complete an Instrument Flight Rating (IFR) course while completing practical flight training towards their PPL and CPL. At this stage WAC also encourages students to enrol in the first extramural paper with Massey University, Nelson Marlborough Institute of Technology (NMIT), or Griffith University in Australia. Following this, students complete one paper per semester to achieve the four required extramural papers for the diploma.

Explanation

WAC receives funding to provide the practical and theory training for the PPL, CPL, and IFR through its agreement with NMIT. Students enrol with another provider to complete the four extramural papers, so WAC does not receive funding for this study. However, it has designed the training programme so that students receive ongoing assistance from the chief flight instructor and the general manager to complete the extramural papers in order to increase the likelihood of students achieving the diploma.

The programme is structured so that students are able to sit a few theory papers first to see if they are able to succeed in ASL exams before they take on the high cost of the practical flying required to gain a licence or go on to complete study towards the diploma. Students complete the extramural papers in their own time while continuing towards their CPL.

The training content is aligned to the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) regulations and training requirements and students sit external examinations set by ASL to assess their knowledge of these requirements. Changes to CAA requirements are regularly reviewed and the programme is updated by the deputy flight instructor to ensure the training is meeting industry regulatory body needs. The tutors also review the knowledge deficiency reports (KDRs) provided by ASL on individual examination results. These reports identify any trends or gaps in the students' knowledge so that training materials or timetables can be adjusted accordingly. Training topics include law, navigation, meteorology, human factors, and principles of flight. In addition, students learn valuable life skills such as decision-making, personal responsibility, and professionalism.

The extramural papers required to complete the diploma focus either on management theory or on aviation science and are delivered and assessed by external training providers.

In response to industry changes, the organisation has identified a need for the training to include flight deck management as an additional knowledge that airlines expect of their captains.

Students collectively meet with the general manager twice a year to provide group feedback. The discussions are documented and actions presented in writing and discussed with tutors to see where improvements can be made to the training materials or delivery. An example of a change suggested by students, which has been implemented by the organisation, was to combine the PPL and CPL exam times because these subjects are taught in conjunction. As a result of student feedback, the organisation also developed a more thorough interview process and provided better information on training and career pathways to reduce confusion about diploma requirements and to inform students of the value of the diploma.

Overall, feedback from students and industry shows that the programme is successful in meeting their needs. NMIT has also continued to support the training delivered by WAC.

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**.

Context

Flight instructors are qualified in the technical aspects of flight training as well as in delivery and teaching methods as part of the C Category instructor training included in the CPL. Tutors all have an instructor rating and most have completed an adult education qualification. The flight instructors identify students' preferred learning styles to provide a range of activities to assist learning.

Explanation

At the beginning of the course, tutors set out the expected exam dates and graduation timeframe so that students can follow their progression towards the qualification. The deputy flight training officer monitors the students' progress to ensure they pass their ground theory examinations in order to begin their practical flight training.

Theory classes are delivered in lecture style with some group discussion encouraged. Each tutor uses a resource box with lesson plans, resources, and PowerPoint displays to supplement the textbook, chosen for its relevance to industry requirements. The resource boxes are checked prior to delivery and additional resources added if needed. Tutors give feedback to identify what works and what needs to be changed. The tutors develop or amend their own lesson plans and check that these align to the latest CAA regulations and that references to the textbook are included.

After each training flight the tutor debriefs the students and writes comments on their individual training records to use as future reference for training needs. The tutors review knowledge deficiency reports (KDRs) and tutors' debrief notes to ensure that the training is

providing students with the skills and knowledge required to pass. Students sit mock assessments before the external examinations to prepare them and for tutors to identify whether further assistance is required. The high student achievement results for the ASL examinations and low number of re-sits indicate that the teaching methods are effective.

At the organisational level tutors meet regularly to discuss student progress in each area and to review KDRs in order to track trends and to make improvements to the training. An example of where this has helped students was when the KDRs showed a need for more low-flying knowledge, so WAC increased the stringency of the mock test (formative) and since then has experienced no problems with students passing this exam.

To support tutors in their role, the chief flight instructor observes new flight instructors taking night classes and assists them when they are teaching classes to students during the day. The organisation encourages open communication between tutors and management staff to follow up concerns with students' progress and to provide support or advice to tutors. The tutors in general have a learner-centred approach to teaching, as many have themselves been through the training at WAC.

1.5 How well are learners guided and supported?

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 **Excellent**.

Context

Students enrolled in the diploma are required to complete theory and practical training as well as sit four extramural papers. This requires a high level of commitment and motivation because parts of the course are self-directed.

Explanation

Potential students are interviewed by a member of the management team using behavioural-type questions to assess their suitability for pilot training. If students show an aptitude then they must pass a maths test and a flight simulation test. In this way, WAC ensures it is enrolling students who are capable of completing the programme. As a result of better selection processes, WAC has enrolled more committed students.

Students are required to complete all the ground theory papers before they go on to the practical flight training. Each student has a flight training plan showing the exams passed, the number of practical hours flown, when they are able to fly solo, and when they are expected to be ready to complete a cross-country flight. This enables the students to ensure they keep up with the theory requirements and to book practical flight times to complete their training.

Management and tutors use the students' flight training plans as well as the KDRs and attendance records to identify whether students may be struggling. Where students are seen to be struggling, a meeting is set up with the general manager and chief flight instructor to see what additional support they can provide to help students to achieve. For example, extra tuition may be scheduled with the general manager or instructors.

The deputy chief flight instructor said student support processes have improved since he began in 2006. The administration coordinator also helps to identify students who need more assistance. Students said the organisation explained the course requirements well and found the staff were very friendly and genuinely wanted to create a good learning environment. Comments from students received at the evaluation visit included, “You can learn at your own pace, and tutors help you along”.

The general manager keeps track of the students enrolled in the diploma. The general manager has a CPL and is currently completing papers at level 6, so is able to relate to some of the issues students may be facing with study. Previously, students completed the extramural papers after they had completed their flying and CPL and IFR. Now students complete the papers alongside the flight training, so they still have regular contact with tutors who help with their motivation to finish. The organisation is currently reviewing the idea of setting up study groups for mutual support for students doing the same diploma papers.

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**.

Context

The management team, consisting of the general manager, the chief flight instructor, the safety officer, and senior flight instructors, meets four times a year.

Explanation

The organisation has a culture of ongoing review, from management through to instructors. Tutors are all involved in reviewing achievements to make improvements, whether it is on the course or monitoring tools to support students.

The committee meets monthly to review any incidents and accidents and financial and educational performance. This enables the organisation to identify any trends or issues with the training and to respond accordingly.

The organisation is confident that it has a good understanding of the training value in the industry and has developed systems over the last two years that have led to improved outcomes. The organisation started with a small number of EFTS in 2002 to train students in the NMIT diploma and has since grown this to 20 EFTS. As a result WAC has invested in its infrastructure to meet the demands of its training programme.

The organisation’s review meeting last year included tutors as well as administration staff. The purpose was to review policies and procedures and staff roles in applying them. Staff commented that the exercise was useful as it created awareness throughout the organisation of how well it was doing and increased communication and student support by having administration staff involved in flight-training processes.

One current issue the management team is facing is an increase in the cost of Airways New Zealand services, which means that WAC may have to relocate from where it has been providing training since 1932.

Part 2: Performance in 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**.

Previously, less value was placed on the diploma by students and the organisation as the main objective was for students to find work in the aviation industry.

However, because WAC wants to lift achievement rates for the Diploma in Aviation Science, and since NMIT is also funded on diploma outcomes, the organisation has focussed more on this qualification in last two years. For 2010 there is already an increase in people wanting to enrol in the diploma, which WAC hopes will lead to higher completion rates.

The general manager and the chief flight instructor mentor students completing the diploma papers.

2.2 Focus area: Diploma in Aviation Science

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

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

The diploma consists of all the courses that WAC offers plus four extramural papers delivered by another training provider. Enrolment with an external provider makes it difficult to track diploma completion and provide support for students. Students do very well in completing the courses WAC is responsible for delivering, such as the CPL, PPL, and IFR. The organisation has put in place better selection processes and has provided clearer information for students about the diploma pathway. Staff believe both of these improvements are the key to better diploma outcomes.

Actions Required and Recommendations

Further actions

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

Recommendations

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

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