

# Report of External Evaluation and Review

Wanaka Helicopters Limited

Highly Confident in educational performance

Highly Confident in capability in self-assessment

Date of report: 23 February 2016

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*Final Report*

# Purpose of this Report

*The purpose of this external evaluation and review report is to provide a public statement about the Tertiary Education Organisation's (TEO) educational performance and capability in self-assessment. It forms part of the accountability process required by Government to inform investors, the public, students, prospective students, communities, employers, and other interested parties. It is also intended to be used by the TEO itself for quality improvement purposes.*

## Introduction

### 1. TEO in context

Name of TEO:	Wanaka Helicopters Limited (WHL)
Type:	Private training establishment (PTE)
First registered:	2 March 2007
Location:	4 Lloyd Dunn Avenue, Wanaka Airport, Wanaka
Delivery sites:	The main site above plus a supplementary site for theory delivery at 146 Plantation Road, Wanaka.
Courses currently delivered:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• New Zealand Diploma in Aviation (Helicopter) (General Aviation) (Level 5)</li><li>• Private Pilot Licence (Helicopter)</li><li>• Commercial Pilot Licence (Helicopter)</li></ul>
Code of Practice signatory:	Yes
Number of students:	Domestic: seven full-time and seven casual International: one
Number of staff:	Five full-time; five part-time
Scope of active accreditation:	Domains and unit standards in Aviation up to and including level 6.
Distinctive characteristics:	WHL is both a training provider and a commercial operator doing scenic and charter flights, frost protection and Department of Conservation contracts. The two operations run seamlessly from the same premises, using the same aircraft fleet and staff.

Recent significant changes: Although WHL has been approved to offer the New Zealand Diploma in Aviation since 2012, up until 2015 the PTE had not enrolled any students in the diploma as the bulk of students enrol with WHL with the intention of completing their Private Pilot Licence, Commercial Pilot Licence or Specialist Ratings.

In late 2014, due to the disestablishment of two North Island aviation training providers, WHL was approached by the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) to accommodate students affected by this change. As a result, seven students joined WHL to complete their New Zealand Diploma in Aviation. WHL now has TEC funding and student loan access for 12 equivalent full-time students on an ongoing basis.

Previous quality assurance history: This is WHL's second scheduled external evaluation and review (EER). The first EER was conducted in November 2011, when NZQA was Highly Confident in WHL's educational performance and 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.

WHL was last audited against Part 141 (Flight Training Operations) by CAA in June 2015. There were no findings raised during this audit. Part 141 approval was renewed in April 2013 for five years which is the longest renewal period that CAA will approve.

## 2. Scope of external evaluation and review

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

- Governance, management and strategy

In addition, the following focus areas were selected:

- Helicopter Flight Training including the New Zealand Diploma in Aviation (Level 5), Private Pilot Licence and Commercial Pilot Licence.
- International students – included as a separate focus area and evaluated seamlessly with the other focus areas.

The above focus areas encapsulate all of the teaching and programme delivery activities of WHL.

## 3. Conduct of external evaluation and review

*All external evaluation and reviews are conducted in accordance with NZQA's published policies and procedures. The methodology used is described fully in the web document Policy and Guidelines for the Conduct of External Evaluation and Review available at: <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers-partners/registration-and-accreditation/external-evaluation-and-review/policy-and-guidelines-eer/introduction>. The TEO has an opportunity to comment on the accuracy of this report, and any submissions received are fully considered by NZQA before finalising the report.*

The EER was conducted in early December 2015. Before this EER, the lead evaluator had telephone and email discussions with the training manager to discuss the visit and agree the scope of the EER.

An evaluation team of two made a one and a half-day EER visit to the WHL site at Wanaka airport. There, the evaluation team reviewed a range of documentation and met with:

- The two owner-directors (one of whom is the chief flight instructor)
- Training manager
- Operations manager
- Quality manager
- Two groups of instructors
- Two groups of students
- Internal quality auditor

The evaluation team had phone and email communication with eight external stakeholders, including Aviation Services and Service IQ, which is the industry training organisation with responsibility for the aviation industry.

# Summary of Results

## Statement of confidence on educational performance

NZQA is **Highly Confident** in the educational performance of **Wanaka Helicopters Limited**.

The students who have studied at WHL have achieved excellent results. For instance, all of the 14 students who undertook Commercial Pilot Licence training at WHL in 2014 achieved the qualification. In 2015, all of the seven students currently enrolled in the New Zealand Diploma in Aviation are on track to successfully complete on time.

For those students who are undertaking the qualifications for career reasons, WHL provides good guidance and preparation for employment in the aviation industry. This is borne out by the fact that 13 of the 14 graduates for 2014 are now working in the aviation industry, both in New Zealand and internationally.

Highly effective processes contribute to the excellent outcomes attained by WHL. These include:

- Effective needs assessment and training that is tailored to the identified current and future needs of the industry.
- Training is well contextualised to industry and student needs. Stakeholders confirm that WHL pilots are particularly well prepared for employment by the training environment, including the challenging local topographical and climatic conditions, the level of air traffic at Wanaka airport, and the daily exposure to their commercial operations.
- Staff across all levels of the organisation are in regular contact with graduates. The results indicate that the organisation is preparing students well for employment in the aviation industry and/or as private pilots.
- Instruction and training is delivered by experienced, engaging teachers who use their own flying experience and practical scenarios to ensure the relevance and interest of the training.
- Excellent guidance and support is provided on a one-to-one basis.

In summary, NZQA is highly confident in the educational performance of WHL as it has found clear and comprehensive evidence that WHL is providing quality education and training that leads to positive outcomes for the majority of its students. The organisation is well managed and has a clear philosophy and purpose that is well operationalised. The training is well resourced and WHL uses its resources effectively. WHL management is a professional and cohesive team which displays a clear understanding of their role and respective responsibilities to both the international 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 **Wanaka Helicopters Limited**.

The reasons for this judgement include:

- WHL has established a very reflective process of self-assessment across the 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 present and future 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 at the last EER.
- Educational performance at WHL is largely monitored through the close management of each student's progress through the theory and practical flying components of the helicopter training. This involves regular discussions between the students and the instructors, supported by appropriate record-keeping.
- WHL has comprehensive systems to gather and collate feedback from students and industry organisations. The quality and validity of the information collected is sound and is used to inform improvements to course design and delivery.
- WHL has effectively capitalised on quality assurance audits by external professional bodies such as CAA, and its own internal audit and review process led by an external industry-experienced contractor, to build organisational capability.

WHL has clearly understood and made the transition from traditional flight instruction to an educational institution using an array of teaching strategies. WHL's processes are effective in ensuring that industry and student needs are understood and met, and consistently high standards are maintained. Self-assessment at WHL is ongoing, authentic, transparent and leads to worthwhile improvements.

# 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 WHL have achieved excellent results in the completion of courses and examinations. In 2014, all of the 14 students who enrolled in the Commercial Pilot Licence at WHL have successfully completed their programme and achieved the licence. All students in the New Zealand Diploma in Aviation are on track to complete this year or early in 2016. This is a significant accomplishment for the students and the organisation considering that they 'migrated' to WHL at different stages of a partially completed qualification after being let down by a previous provider. This situation necessitated that every student have an individual learning plan which recognised their current knowledge and competency and mapped out their journey to complete the qualification.

Achievements during training are measured by theory exam results and flight test reports. During the training, WHL instructors supervise students on a daily basis. Mid-way through, and upon completion of a course of study, every student completes an online feedback survey through which they assess the performance of the organisation and provide feedback on the learning methods, instruction delivery and learning environment.

Internally, WHL has set benchmarks, which it has consistently met, in the theoretical and practical components of the training delivery. This includes minimum scores in mock exams, minimum flying hours to be achieved per month, along with meeting minimum flying standards and safety requirements as per CAA requirements.

Students are acquiring new and useful skills and knowledge as a result of their flying training with WHL. Knowledge gained is not only from the courses and unit standards completed, but also from the extensive, up-to-date sector knowledge and expert opinion that the staff share with learners to contextualise their learning (e.g. the latest advice on mountain safety).

Staff at WHL demonstrate a good understanding of the factors that lead to student achievement, and formally and informally analyse and discuss ideas for improving achievement. The instructors at WHL have a very collegial approach and communicate and share information informally on a daily basis. WHL has a

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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.

compulsory training management meeting every month where progress and the achievement of students is the main agenda item.

Students reported that they received timely, accurate and supportive feedback on their progress from WHL staff. Students are also debriefed by their instructor after every flight to identify what the student did well, what he/she did not do so well, and where improvements could be made, either in the student's performance or WHL's instruction. This information is recorded online so that other instructors have instant access to it before each training session commences.

## 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**.

WHL has a strong focus on providing value for its stakeholders, and feedback evidence indicates that the PTE is achieving this. In addition to the New Zealand Diploma in Aviation, the immediate outputs from this training are licences and ratings as awarded by CAA. All Commercial Pilot Licence and diploma students are undertaking this training in preparation for a career in commercial aviation. WHL 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 necessary requirements.

WHL management knows the immediate employment or further study destinations of all graduates and communicates with them regularly through a variety of media, both formally and informally. The information that WHL gains from this engagement is gathered and discussed and, when applicable, leads to improvements in practice. The exit interview process is comprehensive.

As previously noted, WHL graduates are realising excellent outcomes. Thirteen of the 14 graduates for 2014 are now in aviation-related employment in New Zealand and overseas. WHL has put significant effort into tracking the graduates, a task that is notoriously difficult for international education providers.

There is currently a global shortage of experienced helicopter pilots.<sup>2</sup> With 900 registered helicopters, New Zealand has the largest helicopter fleet per capita in the world. WHL is attuned to the valuable opportunities this situation affords and actively seeks to place Commercial Pilot Licence graduates into work.

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<sup>2</sup> Helicopter Association Industries conference March 2014 expressed serious concerns about the lack of trained pilots and instructors worldwide.

Through his role as an examiner for CAA, as well as his ongoing engagement with local aviation-related organisations (such as the Wanaka Airport Users Group and the Aviation Industry Association), the chief flight instructor of WHL contributes significantly to maintaining high standards in initial helicopter flight training and the ongoing learning of professional pilots. For instance, in 2014 the chief flight instructor was awarded the Helicopter Association International (HAI) International Flight Instructor of the Year award. This was the first time that HAI had selected a New Zealander for this award.

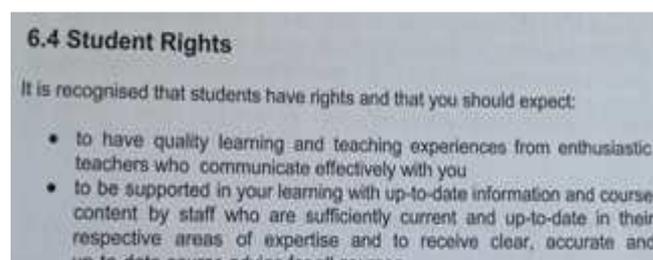
### 1.3 How well do programmes and activities match the needs of learners and other stakeholders?

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**.

Evidence from stakeholders, including students, indicates that WHL engages well with its sector and is valued for the contribution it makes. WHL management and staff have ongoing interaction with stakeholders, including regular contact with graduates, CAA and the helicopter network. This means that the needs and expectations of stakeholders are understood. For instance, WHL's mountain flying course was developed to further enhance Commercial Pilot Licence graduates' employment prospects.

A rigorous, but very customer-focused, selection process not only establishes student suitability for helicopter pilot training but also ensures that the goals and aspirations of each student are individually identified at enrolment and an individual programme is tailored to suit. As they progress, students are helped to identify their particular interest or direction in the industry, and the teaching is tailored to suit. For instance, if a student particularly wishes to enter the tourism industry or agricultural work, instructors will, whenever possible, contextualise the training accordingly. The feedback from students was also that the organisation works actively to meet their different learning styles, and there is flexibility around weather and work/life requirements. This makes them feel valued as a student and supports their learning. The evaluators were particularly impressed with the 'student rights' section of the student handbook, especially the excerpt below:



The commitment to meeting the needs of students was evident at all levels of the organisation. Having the courage to put this commitment on paper in the form of the student rights declaration is commendable.

WHL does not structure its 'ground school' in the same way as many other aviation schools, whereby students complete all of the theory study and examinations before they starting flying. Rather, WHL delivers its ground school concurrently with practical flight training. Management and staff have found that this structure not only motivates students, but most importantly enables students to apply the theory they learn immediately to a practical context and vice versa. Effective use of an online management system has enabled students to access learning material online and study at their own pace.

The organisation has worked hard over time to ensure that the teaching is closely related to the needs of the students. WHL seeks feedback from learners through a variety of mechanisms such as formal feedback forms which are completed by the students at least once per month. These are then analysed by the training manager and improvements made as appropriate. Staff members, starting with the chief flight instructor, have an open-door policy and it is clear that students approach them with any problems and issues.

#### 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 WHL, and a robust structure that will ensure good teaching continues as the organisation grows. All staff are enthusiastic and passionate about their teaching and are well supported by management. Instructors and students relate well to each other. The strong rapport between students and staff was evident from discussions and evaluation survey outcomes. Student feedback about the organisation and teaching is very positive. Students value the open, friendly, family approach and find their learning activities interesting and challenging. They confirmed that the dual operation of the organisation is managed well and that commercial operations enhance the training rather than detract from it. Students have access to staff outside of formal classes and can make suggestions about improvements. Students were unanimous and candid about the fact that if they had a problem they would feel comfortable about going directly to the chief flight instructor. Students noted that staff were responsive to any concerns or issues raised.

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

flight instructor regularly conducts interviews with students to review progress and gain feedback on the course.

Staff are well qualified with A Category (A-CAT), B-CAT and C-CAT 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 C-CAT course. WHL is fortunate to have on the staff two pilots who also have extensive educational experience outside of aviation and who use their experience in coaching and mentoring instructors in their teaching practice. All instructors have a professional development plan, but in the main they relate to furthering their aviation qualifications and experience. The evaluation team believes that stronger policy and practice in the area of formal professional development as tertiary teachers (for instance sending instructors to various courses on adult teaching<sup>3</sup>), would better demonstrate excellent practice.

Given that all summative assessment is through external examination, WHL does not require a moderation system. The chief flight instructor does, however, closely monitor examination results to identify trends, positive or negative, which may indicate good practice and/or areas for improvement.

## 1.5 How well are learners guided and supported?

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

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

WHL's commitment to first-rate training ensures that a high level of guidance and support is provided to the 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 WHL and its staff. The high level of pre-enrolment counselling ensures that the right students are enrolled at the right time in the right programme, thereby minimising barriers to student success.

The pre-enrolment information is comprehensive and designed to ensure that students make an informed decision before committing to a significant personal and financial investment. All students receive a comprehensive orientation/induction programme in their first week of study. The recent introduction of the ADAPT

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<sup>3</sup> Courses and workshops are offered in Otago by Ako Aotearoa, and adult teaching courses are offered in the region by Otago Polytechnic or Southern Institute of Technology.

aptitude test for intending students has enabled WHL to identify any areas where the students will require additional or specialist support.

WHL has robust and client-friendly systems for the pastoral care of its students. 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 means that they are given individual support. There is a designated support staff member with 24-hour phone contact should the students require assistance when away from the site.

WHL has robust 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**.

WHL is a privately owned and operated aviation training provider with a strategic plan that has set clear goals and objectives. The organisation has developed and embedded effective systems for monitoring student achievement and supporting staff to improve educational performance. Quality, in relation to both aircraft operations and pilot training, is well embedded in the organisation. For example students, under guidance from the contracted quality auditor, conduct internal audits as part of meeting a unit standard which forms part of their course. This helps students to understand quality management and also normalises quality management in the organisation.

WHL's management recognises that the key to success of their business lies in the success of their students and the value they gain from their training. WHL actively supports strategies to increase student achievement and to support students to meet their employment goals. The owners' leadership and style are a strong influence on organisational culture, fostering professionalism, safety and customer service.

WHL has employed very highly qualified and experienced staff which it manages effectively and actively develops. The value that WHL management put on the educational experience and know-how of their training team is clearly apparent and makes a positive difference to educational quality. The organisation is well equipped with physical and learning resources for the number of students that it currently has. There are systems in place to monitor resourcing to ensure that there are always sufficient resources, mainly aircraft and instructors, to meet the needs of the students. The balance between the training and commercial operations of the organisation is well managed and the ratio between them is clearly recorded in the business plan.

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Monitoring of performance within the organisation is regular, transparent and robust and the organisation encourages opportunities for reflection on its role and how to continue to make ongoing and continuous improvements to meeting the needs of students and other stakeholders. 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 an embedded and authentic, 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: 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**.

### 2.3 Focus area: International students

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.

# 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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