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Report of External Evaluation and Review

Christchurch Helicopters 2001 Ltd
trading as Christchurch Helicopters

Highly Confident in educational performance

Confident in capability in self-assessment

Date of report: 29 September 2016

Contents

Purpose of this Report.....	3
Introduction	3
1. TEO in context.....	3
2. Scope of external evaluation and review	5
3. Conduct of external evaluation and review.....	5
Summary of Results	6
Findings	8
Recommendations	16
Appendix	17

MoE Number: 8031
NZQA Reference: C22538
Date of EER visit: 10 June 2016

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:	Christchurch Helicopters 2001 Ltd trading as Christchurch Helicopters
Type:	Private training establishment (PTE)
First registered:	14 July 2015
Location:	Harewood Aviation Park, 25 Aviation Drive, Christchurch
Delivery sites:	As above
Courses currently delivered:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• New Zealand Diploma in Aviation – General Aviation (Helicopter) (Level 5)• Commercial Pilot Licence (Helicopter) training scheme• Flight Instructor Rating training scheme
Code of Practice signatory:	No
Number of students:	Domestic: 12 equivalent full-time students – four non-funded, with one Māori and two female students.
Number of staff:	Nine full-time equivalents
Scope of active accreditation:	Domains and unit standards in Aviation up to and including level 6.
Distinctive characteristics:	The current chief executive founded Christchurch Helicopters in the late 1990s, growing it into a large aviation company with divisions of pilot training, commercial, agriculture, check and training,

maintenance and fixed wing jets. Christchurch Helicopters was also an NZQA-registered training provider from 2001-2007. Helicopter maintenance was retained throughout. New Zealand Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) certified flight training instruction was re-established at Christchurch Helicopters in 2008. CAA certification under Air Operations regulations (Part 135) was obtained in 2012, and the Agricultural Certificate (Part 137) in 2015. Christchurch Helicopters is the New Zealand agent for the sale and servicing of an internationally manufactured two-seater helicopter. The training establishment is located within the operational facility at Christchurch International Airport, sharing staff and the aircraft fleet with the other divisions of the operation.

Recent significant changes: Christchurch Helicopters sought NZQA registration in 2015 to enable them to receive course approval from NZQA and funding from the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC). The PTE gained approval from NZQA in April 2016 to offer the New Zealand Diploma in Aviation to eight equivalent full-time students over two years. This programme began five weeks before the external evaluation and review (EER). The diploma includes compulsory Commercial Pilot Licence and additional modules or 'ratings', designed to prepare the graduates for work in the industry. A theory instructor was employed full-time to teach the significantly increased intake of students in 2016.

Previous quality assurance history: Although this is a newly registered provider with NZQA, Christchurch Helicopters has been a commercial aviation operator under CAA Air Operations regulations for over 20 years and has been regularly audited. CAA approved Christchurch Helicopters to conduct aviation training and assessments in New Zealand as prescribed under Part 141 of CAA regulations. CAA issues the pilot licences, and all theory, and practical (flight test) assessments are conducted by Aviation Services Ltd (ASL). The last CAA audit in March 2015 raised no findings and Part 141 approval has been renewed for an extended

duration of five years.

2. Scope of external evaluation and review

The lead evaluator reviewed NZQA-held data and documents submitted by the PTE, and discussed the scope of this EER with the flight training manager by video-conference. This is a small PTE newly registered in July 2015, and the funded diploma programme had only been delivered for five weeks at the time of the EER visit. Therefore, only the mandatory focus area of governance, management and strategy was selected, with a strong focus on processes. However, as Christchurch Helicopters has also been delivering CAA-approved flight training for number of years, the provider agreed on site to add 'flight training' as an additional focus area, to gain better insight into their overall training activities.

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 evaluation team of two evaluators spent one day at the Christchurch Helicopters site. The team met with the chief executive officer, operations manager, flight training manager, senior pilot and flight instructor, ground school instructor, commercial pilot and crewman, two advisory group members (representatives of ASL), and the industry training organisation (ServiceIQ), as well as 12 students and one graduate.

The evaluation team also spoke with a representative of CAA, another helicopter training provider and a graduate by telephone. During the site visit, the evaluators reviewed a range of documentation, including quality management policies, enrolment information and policies, student achievement records, and course design, delivery and assessment materials. Some additional materials were requested and reviewed after the site visit.

Summary of Results

Statement of confidence on educational performance

NZQA is **Confident** in the educational performance of **Christchurch Helicopters**.

The organisation has met the most important needs of the graduates and industry through the delivery of high-quality, one-to-one flight instruction. They are developing their processes to ensure this level of performance continues with the increased level of training activity in 2016. The key points supporting this judgement are:

- Students have achieved excellent results. All 10 self-funded students since 2014 have gained certification as commercial pilots and for their flight instructor ratings. They have learnt valuable knowledge, skills and values from highly respected and experienced flight instructors, preparing them well for employment. All of these graduates are working in the industry in a range of roles. Even at this early stage, the new diploma class has achieved very strong theory results.
- The team of instructors has delivered an integrated programme of theory and flight instruction closely aligned with industry expectations. Christchurch Helicopters provides an excellent environment for learning: an extensive low-flying area adjacent to an international airport, state-of-the-art helicopters, and an active helicopter operation including on-site maintenance. Regular communication and systems have monitored and supported excellent learner achievement to date.
- Christchurch Helicopters has a strong reputation and an effective leadership and culture which have supported educational performance and contributed significantly to wider industry outcomes. The PTE has put in place new processes to support the increased level of educational activity for NZQA-assessed training. The PTE is continuing to evolve systems and processes to ensure an ongoing high quality of educational performance.

Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **Confident** in the capability in self-assessment of **Christchurch Helicopters**.

Christchurch Helicopters has been highly effective in self-assessing its one-to-one flight instruction based on in-depth understanding of student educational performance. The PTE has put in place some enhanced processes to review the increased level of revised training activity, to maintain the excellent levels of performance.

- Christchurch Helicopters is small, tight-knit organisation with an established high-performance culture. Flying and academic results and business performance are reviewed on an ongoing basis to look for ways to improve. Individual student achievement is closely monitored and has ensured that the very small number of students each year have consistently gained certification and work in the industry. Although only recently NZQA-registered, the PTE's thinking is long term and attuned to the needs of the aviation industry and the students. The decision to deliver a government-funded diploma is a systematic response to meet the need for a greater number of higher quality, safety-conscious, work-ready graduates.
- The PTE began in April 2016 delivering an NZQA-approved training programme offering a New Zealand Diploma in Aviation to a class of 12 self-funded and funded students with a more diverse range of needs. The PTE has implemented a range of self-assessment processes to support this delivery, including: a detailed formal recruitment procedure; a student evaluation and an analysis of the results after each ASL theory exam; establishment of an industry advisory group; and helping lead a collaboration of government-funded helicopter training providers. Recent improvements include changes to teaching materials and the physical learning environment.
- Christchurch Helicopters is in the early stages of implementation to more formally, systematically and regularly review performance in key areas. Some additional recommended processes include: establishing academic achievement benchmarks, a more in-depth review after each ASL paper, regular performance appraisals, and observation of teaching. Clear objectives and measures are needed to judge the effectiveness of Christchurch Helicopters' processes and the overall success of the revised training programme.

Findings¹

1.1 How well do learners achieve?

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

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

The achievement of Christchurch Helicopters' students to date is very strong. Since 2014, all of the 10 individually trained self-funded students have completed an assortment of licences and ratings. At the time of the EER visit, seven students had gained a Flight Instructor Rating and three their Commercial Pilot Licence. The ASL representative interviewed by the EER team thought the theory paper results of past students was of 'a good standard, better than average'. After just five weeks of tuition, the nine students enrolled on the diploma and three self-funded students have achieved well; there was just one non-completion (on the first attempt) from the first two theory papers assessed. This is an excellent result given that the students have not yet started their flight training.

The students learn extensive and highly relevant skills, knowledge and attitudes from their training experience at this PTE. Their capability is developed formally through completing the compulsory theory topics and their flight tests.² In addition, the students gain current, detailed and vital knowledge from directly observing and listening to experienced and respected staff carrying out various roles in Christchurch Helicopters' substantial and diverse helicopter business.

Staff showed a good understanding of student achievement. Christchurch Helicopters' instructors review the ASL test results; the EER team views this external assessment as reliable. The instructors, working one-to-one with their small number of students, informally communicate and share information about their students' achievements on a regular basis at their staff meetings. The significant increase in enrolments on the diploma programme has led Christchurch Helicopters to establish a new student management system to track educational achievement and training progress. It is too early to rate how effectively this system tracks student progress and achievement. Christchurch Helicopters has a qualification completion target set by the funder, the TEC. The PTE needs to set formal targets and benchmark their results against appropriate external measures. No Māori or Pasifika students have been reported as completing flight training to date.

¹ The findings in this report are derived using a standard process and are based on a targeted sample of the organisation's activities.

² None of the non-CAA diploma modules had been assessed at the time of the EER.

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 primary purpose of the Christchurch Helicopters training arm is to produce high-quality, safety-conscious certified helicopter pilots and instructors ready to work in the industry. There is a range of reliable evidence that Christchurch Helicopters is making a significant contribution to meeting this objective. Two external industry stakeholder representatives that were interviewed said Christchurch Helicopters has a strong reputation for producing first-rate new pilots. The current students who were interviewed had similar views of Christchurch Helicopters' reputation. This perspective was supported by the ongoing presence of career-focused, full-fee paying students – a distinctive feature for a helicopter training provider in New Zealand.

Christchurch Helicopters is producing a range of certified pilots with the appropriate ratings needed to be work-ready for the industry³, i.e. as C, D and E Category instructors as well as certified commercial pilots. All 14 Christchurch Helicopters students who have been CAA certified since 2014 have succeeded in gaining an industry-related role – as an instructor, commercial pilot, ground crew or using a helicopter in their own business. Two are now working for Christchurch Helicopters. The two graduates interviewed said they had been well prepared for working in the industry. Tracking of graduates is relatively straightforward given the small industry with strong connections between training providers and commercial operators and the low number of graduates. Christchurch Helicopters will need to more systematically track the future destination of the higher number of graduates they are planning to produce, and the value to these learners of the electives/ratings that Christchurch Helicopters offers.

Christchurch Helicopters has a very strong understanding of the knowledge, skills and values that industry requires of private and commercial helicopter pilots and flight instructors. The chief executive is a flight testing officer, respected in the industry as a leader, which is reflected in his appointment to a number of significant industry-related governance roles. Christchurch Helicopters also brings knowledge and experience of global trends through being the sole New Zealand agent for an international line of helicopters. Christchurch Helicopters is helping to lead a recent collaboration among New Zealand helicopter training providers to improve the consistency and quality of training being offered. One key motive for the PTE's decision to deliver the diploma programme was to increase the number of well-prepared graduates entering the industry; the difference they make to the industry will need to be assessed.

³ This training also includes the upskilling of Christchurch Helicopters staff.

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 **Good**.

The training that Christchurch Helicopters offers matches well the needs of industry and the students. Christchurch Helicopters has an in-depth grasp of the needs of industry through being a long-term and well-recognised commercial operator, employer and provider of CAA-certified training. Christchurch Helicopters has taken part in the steering group of the targeted review of aviation qualifications. The PTE has established an industry advisory group, which includes the key stakeholder representatives of the industry training organisation, an ASL senior manager, as well as industry employers. The PTE offers a training facility that stakeholders view as top quality. Key attributes include: location in an active international airport; a large low-flying area; easy access to mountain flying; a range of state-of-the-art helicopters; and a fully operational engineering facility. Christchurch Helicopters is a commercial operator providing a broad range of services to customers and clients including tourist, agricultural and commercial work. Students are exposed to standard business activities such as contact with customers and other stakeholders, live air operations and backroom office activities. Learners are able to observe first-hand how their acquired formal learning is being translated each day into a real and dynamic industry context. One external stakeholder described Christchurch Helicopters as offering the students a 'holistic' or well-rounded training experience. The PTE offers a purpose-built classroom for the new diploma class.

Christchurch Helicopters has become NZQA-registered and gained programme approval to enable the PTE to access government funding. The New Zealand Diploma in Aviation closely matches the compulsory CAA licence content. The programme has a clear rationale, including additional modules preparing students to meet industry requirements including first aid, maintenance and safety management systems. The curriculum begins with foundation knowledge, staircasing to a mix of theory and flight instruction, enabling students to apply their knowledge. Course materials are both paper-based and available online.

After each paper is delivered, a student completes a written evaluation; the feedback has been highly positive to date. Self-assessment would be strengthened by the instructor separately evaluating each paper, comparing their evaluation with the student feedback, reflecting on the findings, recording any changes and assessing the impact of those changes when the paper is next delivered. Also, a periodic discussion facilitated by someone with an educational and flight training background would gather more in-depth student feedback.

Christchurch Helicopters has put in place a comprehensive recruitment process for the diploma programme. In the first intake, the PTE has succeeded in enrolling two

Final Report

women and a Māori student, groups not well represented in the helicopter industry. Christchurch Helicopters has partnered with Gateway-funded programmes offering a pathway from secondary school to commercial flight training; two former Gateway students are also enrolled on the diploma programme. With the higher number of students, Christchurch Helicopters has less direct one-to-one interaction with and knowledge of each individual student, which requires the PTE to use more formalised processes. Christchurch Helicopters will need to review the effectiveness of these various new processes and initiatives – for instance, the effectiveness of the recruitment procedures to select students who complete the course and then go on to industry-related work. However, the processes also need to provide timely information that is useful for robust decision-making and that supports improvements in educational achievement and outcomes.

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 **Good**.

There was clear evidence that highly effective teaching, including ground and flight instruction practice, is being delivered by Christchurch Helicopters. Christchurch Helicopters' staff are highly qualified with industry-related instructor ratings, including A-CAT (A Category), B-CAT, C-CAT and a specialist E-CAT certified instructor. Christchurch Helicopters has pilots and instructors on staff with strong reputations who have considerable flight time hours in different environments/contexts as well as extensive industry experience. A vital component of high-quality flight instruction is sharing detailed first-hand experiences of actual flying with the students. Safety is critical for every single flight, as a 'pilot cannot pull over to the side' when facing unexpected situations. These rich experiences provide students with a bank of knowledge to more safely and effectively respond to a wide range of flying scenarios. Also, the staff endeavour to instil in their students clear and appropriate values and ethics that are essential for producing safe and effective pilots. The two Christchurch Helicopters graduates interviewed rated Christchurch Helicopters highly for these attributes when compared with their prior training experiences, and so better prepared them for flying and careers in the industry. Christchurch Helicopters also invites highly experienced pilots as guest speakers, as well as other key industry players such as air traffic controllers and ASL representatives.

The ground school instructor who teaches the new diploma class has an appropriate aviation B-Cat instructor rating for fixed wing aircraft and previously taught the content at another PTE. There is a plan for him to work towards his helicopter licence. All of the instructors have learnt instructional techniques. However, excellent practice would include the ground school instructor undertaking periodic formal professional development as a tertiary teacher and sharing this learning with other instructors. Some regular and systematic supervision by an experienced and qualified educator, including classroom observation, will help ensure ongoing high

standards. One full-time instructor has a diploma in primary teaching, but to date he has had limited involvement in the implementation and delivery of the aviation diploma programme. Christchurch Helicopters is commended for reviewing staff flight instruction every six months.

Student feedback on the theory instructor to date has been mostly positive. Students interviewed expressed their appreciation of being able to ask many questions, not only of the theory instructor, but also of the other experienced Christchurch Helicopters staff members, including the chief executive and maintenance staff. Theory delivery includes the use of a data projector and whiteboard, online and paper-based materials, various props, and field trips, such as visiting air traffic control to observe radio communications. Mock exams are used as formative assessment to prepare for the external ASL assessments. The diploma electives will require additional internal moderation procedures. It is essential that robust processes are in place so that the high quality of teaching continues for the increased number of students enrolled.

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 **Good**.

Self-funded Christchurch Helicopters students are generally well motivated and independent learners who invest significant tuition fees to pay for the one-to-one instruction to obtain a certified licence. Student and graduate feedback was consistently positive about the guidance and support provided. This assistance has been appropriate and effective, with all Commercial Pilot Licence students gaining a relevant licence and ratings. Christchurch Helicopters has recently enrolled students on the Student Achievement Component-funded aviation diploma course with some differing needs and flying aspirations. It is too early in the programme delivery to judge the effectiveness of the support and guidance provided. However, there is clear evidence that Christchurch Helicopters has in place a range of processes to support and guide their current students.

All the students interviewed said Christchurch Helicopters was a small and friendly place with a welcoming open-door policy. Christchurch Helicopters has a clear business customer service ethic and views students as their customers and stakeholders. The organisation is competitive with fees, and students can now access student loans and allowances, which helps them manage the significant financial commitment. The facilities are suitable for students to relax in outside class times. Formal recruitment procedures have been established to recruit students motivated and able to complete the two-year programme. The process includes submitting a written piece of work on why they want to be a pilot, one-to-one interviews, a test flight and referees. The new student management system tracks mock and formal ASL results and relevant support information. There is a formal written student evaluation after each paper, which appears to be

a good opportunity to meet with the students and follow up and discuss any possible changes. The overall effectiveness of Christchurch Helicopters' recruitment and support systems needs to be periodically reviewed.

1.6 How effective are governance and management in supporting educational achievement?

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**.

Christchurch Helicopters' leadership has a clear training purpose and direction to produce high-quality, safety-conscious, work-ready graduates for the industry. To date, the PTE has been very effective in achieving this purpose. It is vital that Christchurch Helicopters closely monitor and systematically review performance to maintain past high standards of performance.

Christchurch Helicopters is owned and governed by four directors of whom two are managing directors. The mana and abilities of the chief executive officer and new business development manager contribute to the strong organisation's leadership. The operations manager also has a background in aviation training. Christchurch Helicopters' leadership are experienced instructors who are respected by industry and bring with them strong relationships with industry, community and government. The CAA audit in 2015 approved Christchurch Helicopters to provide certified training for five years. This is an extended duration that reflects a high confidence in the organisation's capability. The PTE has recruited and retained experienced staff. Christchurch Helicopters is well resourced and has invested in operational facilities and state-of-the-art helicopters which support high-quality flight instruction. The PTE has a culture and track record of being a high-level performing helicopter operator, including offering excellent one-to-one flight instruction.

The leadership has invested in new processes to support the increased and new educational activity. These include recruiting a full-time ground school instructor, a new student management system and additional classroom equipment. However, Christchurch Helicopters is a small organisation and needs to be aware of potential capacity and capability issues. Key challenges include higher student numbers and compliance with NZQA and TEC regulations. The PTE has accessed external expertise to meet tertiary education regulatory requirements. Christchurch Helicopters now needs a more formalised, periodic approach to reviewing educational performance, identifying actions to support improvements and reviewing the impact of these actions on educational achievement and outcomes. This would be reflected in minuted management and instructors' meetings and periodic reporting. The quality management system needs to be progressively revised to reflect changing educational practice. This report has identified other processes that they need to maintain ongoing high-quality performance. Christchurch Helicopters is currently building on its strong existing organisational

and training culture, but it is too early to fully judge the effectiveness of the systems recently put in place.

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 **Good**.

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

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 **Good**.

Recommendations

NZQA recommends that Christchurch Helicopters:

- Monitor and externally and internally benchmark educational achievement and key outcomes.⁴
- Regularly review educational performance including academic results and student and instructor evaluations, building on the system in place.
- Provide regular and systematic supervision, classroom observation, professional development and performance appraisals to support improved teaching practice.
- Systematically and periodically assess how well the Christchurch Helicopters educational experience has met the needs of graduates and industry.
- Develop a more formal quality improvement approach where the information gathered above is used to strengthen the programme delivery, teaching practice, support and guidance offered and other related processes to enhance educational performance and stronger outcomes.

⁴ <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers-partners/external-evaluation-and-review/how-nzqa-evaluates-educational-performance-in-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).

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/>.

NZQA

Ph 0800 697 296

E qaadmin@nzqa.govt.nz

www.nzqa.govt.nz