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External Evaluation and Review Report

Christchurch Helicopters 2001 Ltd
trading as Christchurch Helicopters

Date of report: 17 September 2020

About Christchurch Helicopters 2001 Ltd trading as Christchurch Helicopters

Christchurch Helicopters is a commercial operator which also conducts aviation training and assessments¹ and offers the New Zealand Diploma in Aviation to prepare graduates for employment as commercial helicopter pilots.

Type of organisation:	Private training establishment (PTE)
Location:	Harewood Aviation Park, Christchurch
Code of Practice signatory:	No
Number of students:	Domestic: nine full-time funded ² students in 2020 (14 full-time students in the 2018 intake, including two Māori and two female students); in addition, Christchurch Helicopters delivers training to a small number of part-time self-funded students.
Number of staff:	3.75 full time equivalents (including two full-time instructors)
TEO profile:	See Christchurch Helicopters (NZQA website)
Last EER outcome:	In the 2016 EER, NZQA was Confident in Christchurch Helicopter's educational performance and capability in self-assessment.
Scope of evaluation:	New Zealand Diploma in Aviation (Helicopter) (General Aviation) (Level 5) – NZQA-approved programme (Ref 17060)
MoE number:	8031
NZQA reference:	C39398
Dates of EER visit:	29 and 30 July 2020

¹ Under Part 141 of Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) regulations

² Christchurch Helicopters is eligible for SAC component funding (14 funded equivalent full-time students for 2020)

Summary of Results

Christchurch Helicopters is providing high quality aviation training which is preparing students well for employment. A more systematic approach to self-assessment would strengthen confidence in the PTE's ongoing educational performance.

Highly Confident in educational performance

- Achievement is very strong, with nearly all students successfully completing the diploma and achieving licences and ratings.
- Christchurch Helicopters has extensive long-term links to the wider aviation industry. The programme design and learning context ensures students acquire highly relevant knowledge and skills and have real-world learning opportunities.

Confident in capability in self-assessment

- Most graduates achieve aviation-related employment and are well regarded by employers for their practical skills and professional attitudes.
- Students are well supported in an inclusive and well-resourced learning environment. A systematic approach to identifying knowledge gaps and consolidating learning is leading to improved first-time pass rates for theory components in 2020.
- Christchurch Helicopters monitors educational performance through the close management of individual student progress and periodic reviews of programme design and delivery. The documented evidence base for self-assessment activities, and their impact on educational performance, could be stronger.
- Christchurch Helicopters is well managed and resourced. A clear philosophy and purpose are reflected throughout the organisation. Christchurch Helicopters operates effectively in the regulated aviation environment. A reporting error identified by NZQA in January 2020 has since been rectified.

Key evaluation question findings³

1.1 How well do students achieve?

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Good
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>Student achievement is very strong (refer Appendix 1). All but one student from the two previous intakes have successfully completed the diploma and related licences and ratings. A high proportion of students passed externally assessed theory and flight tests on their first attempt.⁴ Nearly all students (21 out of 22) have achieved their Commercial Pilot Licence on budget (within 150 hours of flight training).</p> <p>The 2020 intake (nine students) have all passed each of their five theory exams on first attempt (average pass rate 89 per cent). These are excellent results, reflecting improvements brought about by changes to classroom teaching (refer 1.3).</p> <p>Students are also developing personal and professional attributes which reflect industry expectations, including decision-making skills, a focus on safety and professional behaviours.</p> <p>Christchurch Helicopters has a good understanding of learner achievement and is focussed on improvement. Individual student progress is tracked and regularly reviewed. That said, there is no evidence of analysis of achievement in the internally assessed modules.</p>
Conclusion:	<p>Students achieve excellent results in the completion of modules and examinations. Christchurch Helicopters also closely monitors students' personal and professional development. Improved analysis of achievement data across all modules would strengthen Christchurch Helicopters' ability to identify strengths and weaknesses for improvement.</p>

³ The findings in this report are derived using a standard process and are based on a targeted sample of the organisation's activities.

⁴ Core CAA syllabus for the PPL (Private Pilot Licence) and CPL (Commercial Pilot Licence) make up approximately 70 per cent of the diploma programme and are externally assessed by ASPEQ on behalf of the CAA. The remaining modules are additional, reflecting specific skill sets required in the industry, and are internally assessed by Christchurch Helicopters.

1.2 What is the value of the outcomes for key stakeholders, including students?

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Good
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>The aviation sector benefits from work-ready graduates who have trained on modern aircraft within a diversified commercial helicopter operation which has a strong reputation and safety record. Stakeholders confirmed that, in addition to the minimum requirements for achieving the Commercial Pilot Licence, students are gaining relevant skills and/or exposure to a variety of employment opportunities. These include agricultural flying, frost prevention, ground skills, sling loading, etc. Stakeholders also noted the professional attitudes and attributes of graduates.</p> <p>Christchurch Helicopters' records show that most of the 2016 intake and approximately half of the 2018 intake (who completed at the end of 2019) have found employment in the aviation industry. Changes arising from COVID-19 are having some impact on short-term graduate outcomes (including reduced tourism-related employment and access to off-shore job opportunities).</p> <p>Christchurch Helicopters' management and staff are active in aviation organisations and have extensive personal networks in the industry. This engagement, together with regular contact with industry advisors and knowledge of industry practice arising from commercial operations, has been used to identify industry needs and valued outcomes. Feedback is gathered from graduates, employers and industry advisors informally as part of this ongoing stakeholder engagement. A more systematic approach to capturing and reviewing this feedback would inform ongoing improvements to valued outcomes.</p>
Conclusion:	Christchurch Helicopters provides motivated graduates with highly relevant skills and attributes for entry-level positions in commercial aviation. Further value might be achieved by periodically capturing and reflecting on external stakeholder input, particularly from advisory members and employers of new graduates.

1.3 How well do programme design and delivery, including learning and assessment activities, match the needs of students and other relevant stakeholders?

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Good
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>Christchurch Helicopters delivers a well-designed programme which includes tightly regulated requirements for pilot training as well as additional modules for industry-specific skills. Content is reviewed in an ongoing way to maintain currency (with industry practice and CAA requirements). Ground and flight instructors work closely together to ensure the integration of theory and practical training.</p> <p>The instructional approach for theory classes has been enhanced in 2020 to better identify and address learning gaps, including systematic analysis of student performance in activities such as quizzes and scenario tests. The teaching schedule also provides more time for reinforcing and consolidating learning. In addition to improved exam results, flight instructors have observed a noticeable improvement in students' grasp and use of basic theoretical concepts in their flight training. This approach reflects a strong commitment not just to students passing exams, but to preparing students to be safe pilots.</p> <p>Students regularly complete surveys to provide feedback on learning methods, course delivery and their learning environment. The programme, including student achievement and feedback, is reviewed by the training manager at the conclusion of each intake. Review documents show that since 2016, a number of improvements have been identified and implemented. Internal moderation of internally assessed modules could be strengthened.</p>
Conclusion:	The diploma programme is well designed and structured to ensure all components are completed by the time the Commercial Pilot Licence is achieved. Christchurch Helicopters is responsive to student and stakeholder feedback.

1.4 How effectively are students supported and involved in their learning?

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Excellent
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>Robust recruitment and selection processes ensure students are motivated, have the required aptitudes for pilot training, and understand the study commitments and career pathways. The 2020 intake was also screened for basic math skills and given revision tasks to be better prepared for the programme's requirements.</p> <p>Previous intakes have included Māori and female students, although the 2020 intake is all male and mostly under 25. Christchurch Helicopters endeavours to achieve diversity through recruitment activity and engagement with schools and local iwi.</p> <p>Instruction is either in small groups (for theory) or individual (for flight training), which provides regular opportunities for targeted support and development. These include feedback on formative and summative theory assessments and additional instruction if required, and standard briefing and de-briefing processes for flight training.</p> <p>Students interviewed said the theory classes are engaging and motivating, although some found the content challenging. Activities are interactive and varied to accommodate different learning styles.</p> <p>The location of the training, alongside commercial operations, supports and provides a useful and motivating context for the learning and reinforces expected professional behaviours. There are also opportunities, from time to time, to be involved in commercial activities under close supervision.</p>
Conclusion:	Christchurch Helicopters provides good quality information and advice to prospective students, and effective ongoing support to foster success.

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

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Good
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>Christchurch Helicopters' leadership have industry experience and credibility, enabling successful training of work-ready and safe pilots. The PTE is characterised by a clear vision, effective communications and a shared commitment to student success. Christchurch Helicopters regularly engages with industry to identify opportunities to improve or add value to the training. Ongoing investment in modern training aircraft and classroom facilities suggests an optimal learning environment.</p> <p>Christchurch Helicopters contributed to the emergency response to significant local events in 2016 and 2017 (rural fires and earthquakes) which affected the pace of training for one intake. However, it also provided unanticipated opportunities for some valuable real-world experience.</p> <p>Standards are maintained within a structured and tightly regulated training environment. The training manager uses the records database and regular meetings and/or ad hoc encounters with staff and students to monitor progress. Oversight and management of planning and review of training could be more systematic, including more formal periodic reporting to governance on key outcomes and self-assessment.</p> <p>Christchurch Helicopters has not followed through on all opportunities for improvement identified at the last EER, such as providing more support for improved teaching practice.</p>
Conclusion:	<p>Christchurch Helicopters' integrated business model ensures that training is closely aligned to industry needs. Christchurch Helicopters focusses on making ongoing improvements to meet the needs of students and other stakeholders. Stakeholder satisfaction is high. A more systematic approach to identifying and reviewing the impact of improvements on educational performance would strengthen self-assessment.</p>

1.6 How effectively are important compliance accountabilities managed?

Performance:	Good
Self-assessment:	Good
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>In January 2020, NZQA found that Christchurch Helicopters' diploma programme delivery did not match the programme approval, specifically in relation to assessment and reporting of compulsory unit standards.⁵ Subsequently, Christchurch Helicopters has confirmed that the standards are being completed and reported as part of the diploma. Christchurch Helicopters has also submitted an application to NZQA to align the diploma programme with the latest New Zealand qualification (Ref 3688) for future intakes.</p> <p>In March 2020, CAA audited Christchurch Helicopters as an approved commercial aviation operator under Part 141 of CAA Air Operations Regulations. The audit raised no findings and Part 141 approval has been renewed for a further five years.</p> <p>Christchurch Helicopters has recently established a new safety management system (which will be subject to audit by the CAA) and appointed a dedicated staff member to manage compliance and reporting. It is also expected that this role will provide back-up to the training manager in key compliance activities.</p> <p>Christchurch Helicopters is currently reviewing its sub-contracting arrangements for the delivery of first aid and fire units.</p>
Conclusion:	Compliance management processes are generally effective, although a more systematic approach to ensuring consistency of delivery with all aspects of programme approval is required.

⁵ This was found to be a breach of Rule 12.1(d) of the Approval and Accreditation Rules.

Focus Areas

This section reports significant findings in each focus area, not already covered in Part 1.

2.1 Focus area: Helicopter flight training

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Good

Recommendations

Recommendations are not compulsory but their implementation may improve the quality and effectiveness of the training and education provided by the tertiary education organisation (TEO). They may be referred to in subsequent external evaluation and reviews (EERs) to gauge the effectiveness of the TEO's quality improvements over time.

NZQA recommends that Christchurch Helicopters 2001 Ltd, trading as Christchurch Helicopters:

- Establish a more systematic approach to capturing and analysing information, and identifying and reviewing the impact of improvements.
- Strengthen the evidence base for self-assessment activities, including feedback from employers, moderation of internally assessed modules, and monitoring teacher effectiveness.

Requirements

Requirements relate to the TEO's statutory obligations under legislation that governs their operation. This include NZQA Rules and relevant regulations promulgated by other agencies.

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

Appendix 1

**Table 1. Achievement data for Christchurch Helicopters (2016 and 2018 intakes)
PPL and CPL theory and flight test⁶**

	2016 intake (#10)	2018 intake (#14)
Theory – overall pass rate (PPL and CPL)	95% (1 withdrawal)	100%
1 st attempt pass rate		
PPL theory	83%	87%
CPL theory	65%	71%
Average pass mark ⁷		
PPL theory	80%	83%
CPL theory	84%	84%
Flight test – overall pass rate (PPL and CPL)	100%	100%
Flight test – 1 st attempt pass rate		
PPL	100%	100%
CPL	100%	93% (13/14 students)

⁶ Data provided by Christchurch Helicopters

⁷ Minimum of 70 per cent required to pass

Final.

Appendix 2

Conduct of external evaluation and review

All external evaluation and reviews are conducted in accordance with NZQA's published rules. The methodology used is described in the web document <https://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers-partners/external-evaluation-and-review/>. 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.

Disclaimer

The findings in this report have been reached by means of a standard evaluative process. They are based on a representative selection of focus areas, and a sample of supporting information provided by the TEO under review or independently accessed by NZQA. As such, the report's findings offer a guide to the relative quality of the TEO at the time of the EER, in the light of the known evidence, and the likelihood that this level of quality will continue.

For the same reason, these findings are always limited in scope. They are derived from selections and samples evaluated at a point in time. The supporting methodology is not designed to:

- *Identify organisational fraud⁸*
- *Provide comprehensive coverage of all programmes within a TEO, or of all relevant evidence sources*
- *Predict the outcome of other reviews of the same TEO which, by posing different questions or examining different information, could reasonably arrive at different conclusions.*

⁸ NZQA and the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) comprehensively monitor risk in the tertiary education sector through a range of other mechanisms. When fraud, or any other serious risk factor, has been confirmed, corrective action is taken as a matter of urgency.

Regulatory basis for external evaluation and review

External evaluation and review is conducted under the Quality Assurance (including External Evaluation and Review (EER)) Rules 2016, which are made by NZQA under section 253(1)(pa) of the Education Act 1989 and approved by the NZQA Board and the Minister authorised as responsible for Part 20 of the Education Act.

Self-assessment and participation and cooperation in external evaluation and review are requirements for:

- *maintaining accreditation to provide an approved programme for all TEOs other than universities, and*
- *maintaining consent to assess against standards on the Directory of Assessment Standards for all TEOs including ITOs but excluding universities, and*
- *maintaining training scheme approval for all TEOs other than universities.*

The requirements for participation and cooperation are set through the Programme Approval and Accreditation Rules 2018, the Consent to Assess Against Standards Rules 2011 and the Training Scheme Rules 2012 respectively. These rules were also made by NZQA under section 253 of the Education Act 1989 and approved by the NZQA Board and the Minister.

In addition, the Private Training Establishment Rules 2018 require registered private training establishments to undertake self-assessment and participate in external evaluation and review as a condition of maintaining registration. The Private Training Establishment Registration Rules 2018 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, training schemes and consents to assess and 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 Quality Assurance (including External Evaluation and Review (EER)) Rules 2016. 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). All rules cited above are available at <https://www.nzqa.govt.nz/about-us/our-role/legislation/nzqa-rules/>, while information about the conduct and methodology for external evaluation and review can be found at <https://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers-partners/external-evaluation-and-review/>.

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