



Mana Tohu Mātauranga o Aotearoa  
New Zealand Qualifications Authority

# External Evaluation and Review Report

Christchurch Helicopters Limited

Date of report: 9 August 2024

# About Christchurch Helicopters Limited

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*Christchurch Helicopters is a commercial helicopter operator that also conducts aviation training and assessments. They offer the New Zealand Diploma in Aviation, designed to produce competent, professional and work-ready graduates for employment as commercial helicopter pilots.*

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Type of organisation:	Private training establishment (PTE)
Location:	Harewood Aviation Park, Christchurch
Eligible to enrol international students:	No
Number of students:	Domestic: 14 full-time students enrolled at the time of the EER. Current students are all male: 12 NZ European and two Māori. No current students have identified as having a disability.  International: nil
Number of staff <sup>1</sup> :	15 full-time, one part-time
TEO profile:	See <a href="#">Christchurch Helicopters</a> on the NZQA website
Last EER outcome:	The previous external evaluation and review (EER) of Christchurch Helicopters, held in July 2020, resulted in summative judgements of Highly Confident in educational performance and Confident in capability in self-assessment.
Scope of evaluation:	New Zealand Diploma in Aviation (Helicopter) (General Aviation) (Level 5) [Qual #3688] – NZQA-approved programme (Ref 118496/3)
MoE number:	8031
NZQA reference:	C57513
Dates of EER visit:	18 and 19 June 2024

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<sup>1</sup> Staff numbers include all staff employed for helicopter operations as well as training, as most staff work seamlessly across both functions.

# Summary of results

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*Christchurch Helicopters is a high quality, specialty provider which produces graduates who are valued by employers and who contribute positively to the aviation industry.*

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## **Highly Confident in educational performance**

- There is clear and comprehensive evidence that Christchurch Helicopters is providing quality education and training leading to positive outcomes for its students.
- Programme completion and examination pass rates since the last EER are 100 per cent. This result is well above national pass rate averages for aviation training.
- Excellent value is evident in graduates achieving licences and ratings and gaining relevant employment in the commercial helicopter industry.

## **Highly Confident in capability in self-assessment**

- The PTE delivers training in appropriate contexts for the aviation industry and student needs. The integration of the training school within a wider helicopter operation adds significant value to the training experience. Stakeholders confirm that graduates of Christchurch Helicopters are very well prepared for employment.
- The organisation is well managed, and the experience and understanding of aviation training by the leadership are significant contributors to the organisation's successful educational performance. The PTE is managing its important compliance accountabilities well, but needs to bring its moderation practices up to the required standard.
- Self-assessment at Christchurch Helicopters is mature, ongoing, authentic and transparent. The PTE uses any findings insightfully to continually adjust and improve its systems.

# Key evaluation question findings<sup>2</sup>

1.1 How well do students achieve?

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

Performance:	<b>Excellent</b>
Self-assessment:	<b>Excellent</b>
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>Christchurch Helicopters' students have achieved outstanding results in the completion of courses and achievement of ratings and licences as awarded by the Civil Aviation Authority of New Zealand (CAA). Since the last EER, every student enrolled in the New Zealand Diploma in Aviation at Christchurch Helicopters has successfully completed the qualification.</p> <p>The authenticity of student assessment and results is confirmed by the fact that all learners are externally assessed. Christchurch Helicopters, like many other aviation providers – including helicopter providers – sees an important measure of the success of the training in the number or percentage of first-attempt passes.</p> <p>Since the last EER, 92 per cent of Christchurch Helicopters' students have passed their theory examination on the first attempt, while 87 per cent have passed their practical flight test on the first attempt. The PTE then benchmarks against the national averages of first-time pass rates of all New Zealand aviation providers. For instance, Christchurch Helicopters' first-time pass rate of 92 per cent in theory examinations is well above the national average of 68 per cent.</p> <p>Internally, the PTE has set benchmarks – which it has consistently met – in the theoretical and practical components of the training delivery. This includes scores in mock exams, flying hours to be achieved by key milestones,</p>

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<sup>2</sup> The findings in this report are derived using a standard process and are based on a targeted sample of the organisation's activities.

	<p>along with meeting flying standards and safety requirements as per CAA requirements.</p> <p>All students are undertaking this training in preparation for a career in commercial helicopter aviation. Students acquire valuable skills and knowledge through their training with Christchurch Helicopters. This knowledge comes not only from the courses but also from the extensive, up-to-date sector insights and expert opinions shared by the staff to contextualise their learning (e.g. the latest advice on firefighting or mountain safety).</p> <p>Christchurch Helicopters has specifically designed its programme to ensure that graduates are employment-ready. This means they possess more than just a commercial licence; they also demonstrate attributes such as professionalism, teamwork and decision-making. Additionally, the PTE ensures that graduates hold other supporting qualifications, such as dangerous goods handling, first aid and load slinging. These are all attributes that the PTE has identified as being highly valued by employers.</p> <p>Christchurch Helicopters' management knows the immediate employment or further study destinations of all graduates and communicates with them regularly through a variety of media, both formal and informal.</p> <p>All graduates since the last EER are employed, either within the helicopter industry or on a pathway to becoming full-time helicopter pilots. Graduates typically start with ground-based jobs in helicopter companies to gain further experience and flying hours before securing full-time pilot positions.</p> <p>Christchurch Helicopters ensures that students are well prepared for this pathway, leaving with realistic expectations of the requirements for a long-term career as a helicopter pilot. Notably, several recent graduates have secured full-time piloting jobs in the Australian agriculture industry, and six recent graduates are now employed as pilots in tourism operations in Botswana.</p>
Conclusion:	<p>Achievement is high and consistently outperforms the sector median. Regular monitoring and analysis of student progress results in the continuous improvement of student achievement. Christchurch Helicopters has a strong focus</p>

	on providing value for the students and stakeholders, and evidence indicates that they are achieving this.
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### 1.3 How well do programme design and delivery, including learning and assessment activities, match the needs of students and other relevant stakeholders?

Performance:	<b>Excellent</b>
Self-assessment:	<b>Good</b>
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>Christchurch Helicopters' processes are effective in ensuring that helicopter industry and student needs are understood and met, and high standards are maintained. There is a high level of student satisfaction with the teaching, resources and facilities. The PTE management and staff have ongoing interaction with stakeholders, including regular contact with graduates, CAA and the helicopter industry network. This means that the needs and expectations of stakeholders are well understood and met.</p> <p>The PTE regularly reviews and updates its programmes to meet the changing needs of stakeholders, and relies on long-established relationships with stakeholders to canvass their views. Christchurch Helicopters is an active member of the Aviation Industry Association of New Zealand and attends meetings at least four times per year. These meetings provide them with direct feedback on how well the programme is meeting industry needs.</p> <p>The majority of instructors are permanent salaried employees. This is unusual in aviation training, which is often characterised by casualisation of the instructor workforce. Instructors at Christchurch Helicopters expressed long-term commitment to the organisation and their profession as aviation educators. All instructors have completed instructional techniques training as part of their instructor rating, but could benefit from exposure to other adult teaching courses such as those offered online by Ako Aotearoa.</p> <p>The majority of Christchurch Helicopters' diploma programme is made up of the core CAA syllabus for the Private Pilot Licence and Commercial Pilot Licence. As such, the programme is externally assessed by ASPEQ on behalf of</p>

	<p>CAA. There are some modules within the PTE's approved New Zealand Diploma in Aviation programme which have been developed by Christchurch Helicopters and are unique to their programme. These modules are internally assessed. The assessments were independently pre-moderated when the programme was developed in 2021, but no further formal pre- or post-assessment moderation has taken place since, as is required in the approved programme document.<sup>3</sup></p> <p>Nonetheless, there is no question about academic integrity as there is a high level of peer and managerial scrutiny over all assessment activity that takes place, given the small numbers of students and nature of helicopter flight training.</p>
Conclusion:	Christchurch Helicopters' programmes effectively align the needs of the helicopter industry with the needs and aspirations of individual students. Action is required to bring moderation practice up to the expected standard.

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

Performance:	<b>Excellent</b>
Self-assessment:	<b>Excellent</b>
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>A rigorous, but very student-centred 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.</p> <p>As students progress, teaching is individually tailored to their specific interests or career direction within the industry. For instance, if a student wishes to enter the tourism industry or pursue agricultural work, instructors will endeavour to contextualise their training to align with these goals whenever possible. One current student, who holds a geology degree, shared how he was matched with project work surveying river mouth formations and changes, aligning his aviation training with his academic background.</p>

<sup>3</sup> Christchurch Helicopters New Zealand Diploma in Aviation (Level 5) 2021 [Ref 118496/3] Section 6.6.4

	<p>The feedback from students was also that the organisation works to meet their different learning styles. Although no students had self-identified as having a disability, staff acknowledged that some students face specific learning challenges, such as dyslexia. To support these students, staff worked closely with them to identify effective learning methods, ensuring they could achieve their goals. This approach is highly learner-centric, focusing on the individual needs of each student.</p> <p>The student voice is very well heard. In addition to formal feedback processes, students can engage directly with PTE management on a daily basis. This not only empowers the students but also ensures that management gets unfiltered feedback from the student body.</p> <p>The organisation has effective processes to review how well it meets the spirit and intent of the Code of Practice.<sup>4</sup> Christchurch Helicopters has completed a thorough self-review of their implementation of the Code. The self-review identified areas for further development to enhance student support and achievement. These have been listed in an action plan which is publicly available on Christchurch Helicopters' website. The review also led to the development of a Learner Wellbeing and Safety Strategic Pathway Plan which sets out a series of actions to, among other objectives: 'Deliver Helicopter training in a way that puts the learner at the centre'.</p>
Conclusion:	Christchurch Helicopters ensures that students are well supported through a welcoming environment, personalised attention, real-world opportunities and effective feedback mechanisms. Students' learning goals are very well understood and effectively responded to.

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<sup>4</sup> [The Education \(Pastoral Care of Tertiary and International Learners\) Code of Practice 2021](#)



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

Performance:	<b>Excellent</b>
Self-assessment:	<b>Excellent</b>
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>Governance and management at Christchurch Helicopters are highly effective in supporting educational achievement. The business is managed ethically and responsibly, with a clear organisational vision, purpose and core business. Roles and responsibilities within governance, management and operations are well defined, ensuring clarity and efficiency in operations. The chief executive brings a wealth of experience from a lifelong career in the aviation industry, particularly in helicopters. Additionally, his extensive involvement in national and regional governmental and advisory bodies provides valuable insights to the organisation.</p> <p>The organisation has excellent resources, including sufficient aircraft and staff, and the campus is ideally located at Harewood Aviation Park. The intentional integration of the training school within a broader helicopter operation emphasises the crucial role of training in meeting industry employment needs.</p> <p>Christchurch Helicopters operates a sustainable business model, evidenced by its long-term viability. The low turnover of staff indicates a mutual appreciation between staff and the organisation, contributing to a stable and supportive learning environment. Staff are supported in their professional development, particularly in aviation-related fields, enhancing their skills and expertise. Senior staff possess extensive aviation education experience.</p> <p>The use of industry contacts and networks helps inform the business, ensuring it remains aligned with industry standards and needs. The PTE closely monitors its performance, ensuring it meets its goals and maintains high standards. There is a culture of constant review and reflection, allowing for continuous improvement.</p>
Conclusion:	The governance and management at Christchurch Helicopters are highly effective at creating a supportive and high-achieving educational environment that fosters

	excellence in aviation training and is highly valued by the helicopter industry.
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## 1.6 How effectively are important compliance accountabilities managed?

Performance:	<b>Excellent</b>
Self-assessment:	<b>Good</b>
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>Christchurch Helicopters demonstrates a clear understanding of its compliance responsibilities and mostly manages them well to ensure obligations are met. This includes ensuring that all staff are well informed about their roles in compliance matters.</p> <p>As a helicopter operation, Christchurch Helicopters is accustomed to operating within a highly regulated environment. The PTE fosters a culture that places a strong emphasis on risk management, safety and compliance in all operations. This commitment ensures that safety standards are upheld and regulatory requirements are consistently met across the organisation.</p> <p>Indications of effective compliance management include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NZQA attestations and returns have been submitted within required timeframes. There is no recent 'risk' history with NZQA.</li> <li>• The courses at Christchurch Helicopters are being delivered consistent with their NZQA programme approval. However, the EER team noted the absence of a structured moderation regime for internal assessments (refer 1.3).</li> <li>• Subcontracting arrangements for the delivery of First Aid and Dangerous Goods Handling are documented and approved by NZQA. Christchurch Helicopters manages these contracts closely and regularly monitors and reviews the training provided under them.</li> <li>• Christchurch Helicopters meets CAA Part 141 Air Operations Regulations. The PTE is on a five-year audit cycle, with the next CAA audit scheduled for March 2025.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A Tertiary Education Commission audit conducted in October 2020 was fully compliant, with no recommendations.</li> <li>• Christchurch Helicopters is meeting its obligations with respect to the Code of Practice. The PTE submitted an attestation to NZQA that they had completed a self-review of their implementation of the Code within required timeframes.</li> </ul>
Conclusion:	Christchurch Helicopters has a clear understanding of its compliance accountabilities and mostly manages them proactively and effectively.

# Focus areas

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

## 2.1 New Zealand Diploma in Aviation (Helicopter) (General Aviation) (Level 5)

Performance:	<b>Excellent</b>
Self-assessment:	<b>Excellent</b>

# 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 Limited:

- Establish a formal structured process and schedule for the moderation of internal assessments as required and stipulated in the Diploma in Aviation (General Aviation) (Helicopter) [ref 118496/3] programme approval.

# 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

## 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 fraud<sup>5</sup>*
- *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.*

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<sup>5</sup> 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 2022, which are made by NZQA under section 452(1)(t) of the Education and Training Act 2020 and approved by the NZQA Board and the Minister of Education.*

*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 excluding universities, and*
- maintaining micro-credential approval for all TEOs other than universities.*

*The requirements for participation and cooperation are set through the Programme Approval and Accreditation Rules 2022, the Consent to Assess Against Standards on the Directory of Assessment and Skill Standards Rules 2022 and the Micro-credential Approval and Accreditation Rules 2022 respectively.*

*In addition, the Private Training Establishment Registration Rules 2022 require registered private training establishments to undertake self-assessment and participate in external evaluation and review as a condition of maintaining registration.*

*NZQA is responsible for ensuring non-university TEOs continue to comply with the rules after the initial granting of approval and accreditation of programmes, micro-credentials 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 2022. 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)). 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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