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# Report of External Evaluation and Review

Airways Corporation of New Zealand  
Limited trading as Airways Training  
Centre

Highly Confident in educational performance

Highly Confident in capability in self-assessment

Date of report: 14 November 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.....	6
Summary of Results .....	7
Findings .....	9
Recommendations .....	16
Appendix .....	17

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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:	Airways Corporation of New Zealand Limited trading as Airways Training Centre
Type:	Private training establishment
First registered:	17 December 1997
Location:	Head Office: 26 Sir William Pickering Drive, Russley, Christchurch  80-82 Tennett Drive, Palmerston North (opposite the Massey University campus)  Auckland is currently inactive  No temporary sites
Delivery sites:	Christchurch (domestic student training centre) and Palmerston North (international student training centre)
Courses currently delivered:	Diploma of Air Traffic Control (with endorsements in Aerodrome and Approach Control, Aerodrome Control, Area Radar, and Area Control) (Level 7)
Code of Practice signatory:	Yes, for 18 years and upwards
Number of students:	Domestic: 15  International: 58 (all internationals are at the Palmerston North campus)  By ethnicity/country of origin: New Zealand European/Pakeha 18 per cent; New Zealand Māori

2 per cent; Pasifika 3.5 per cent; Vietnamese 23 per cent; Chinese 19 per cent; Middle Eastern 30 per cent; African 1 per cent; other 3.5 per cent. The percentage of male to female trainees is 75:25.

Number of staff:	Permanent staff: managers (five), instructors (5.5), administration staff (two), technicians (three), aerodrome simulator pilots (six), radar simulator pilots (nine), casual staff (10 instructors)
Scope of active accreditation:	Air Traffic Services to level 7. Airways Training Centre has recently been accredited to deliver these programmes: Air Traffic Services (Air Traffic Services Theory) (Level 5) and New Zealand Diploma in Air Traffic Services (Level 6). No students have yet enrolled in these programmes. They will do so by the beginning of 2017.
Distinctive characteristics:	Airways Training Centre is the training arm of Airways Corporation which is a state-owned enterprise and is New Zealand's air navigation service provider. Airways Training Centre has been providing air traffic control training in New Zealand continuously since 1944. As well as traditional 'ab initio' (new students), Airways Training Centre also provides operational training to both international and domestic air traffic controllers.
Recent significant changes:	Significant work has begun on introducing blended learning into theoretical teaching components using both an e-learning platform and interactive web-based textbooks.  There are 25 Saudi students enrolled with Airways Training Centre who are receiving training in Brisbane, Australia. Airways Training Centre is working with Service IQ to gain the appropriate permissions for overseas delivery.
Previous quality assurance history:	At the most recent external evaluation and review (EER) in 2012, Airways Training Centre was found to be Highly Confident in both educational performance and capability in self-assessment.
Other:	Airways Training Centre is the sole provider of air

traffic control training in New Zealand, and was involved with the Targeted Review of Qualifications and rewrite of unit standards for the three qualifications in Air Traffic Services (levels 5, 6 and 7) with six air traffic control qualification endorsements at level 7. In collaboration with Massey University School of Aviation, Airways Training Centre has created a pathway to a Bachelor of Aviation Management for students to achieve this qualification with a major in airways training.

Airways Training Centre is professionally associated with the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA); accredited with the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) and TRAINAIR. Airways Training Centre was certified by the European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) in October 2015. CAA audits Airways Training Centre annually. Airways Training Centre is also ISO 9001 certified.

Airways Training Centre's external stakeholders are: CAA (aviation regulator), NZQA (education regulator), Service IQ (industry adviser) and the Airways Corporation of New Zealand (Airways New Zealand) which is the primary industry employer.

## 2. Scope of external evaluation and review

The focus areas selected were governance, management and strategy, international students, and the Diploma of Air Traffic Control (Level 7). This is the entry-level qualification for air traffic controllers and the primary focus of Airways Training Centre.

### 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.*

A team of two evaluators visited the training site in Christchurch over two days. Interviews were held with senior management, including the head of training and the managers for training delivery, training development, learning support and training technologies. A number of Christchurch and Palmerston North instructors were interviewed at the Christchurch centre or by Skype. The evaluators also spoke with international students at Palmerston North by Skype.

Day two included interviews with the chief executive officer, head of safety and assurance and the chief financial officer. A number of recent graduates were phoned subsequent to the on-site visit. A wide range of documents and other resources were also sighted, including the most recent CAA audit report and evidence of accreditations and certification with international aviation organisations. The extensive experience and sector knowledge of the team evaluator was vital to the verification and weighting of information provided to the evaluators.

The Diploma of Air Traffic Control comprises about seven months of theory instruction and practical training at the Christchurch training centre. It includes simulator and computer-based training based on the ICAO curriculum. This is followed by on-job training in regional air traffic control towers for between three and nine months. This enables trainees to complete the diploma and achieve the New Zealand air traffic controller licence. The licence is issued by CAA and recognised by ICAO. International students at the Palmerston North training centre complete theory and practical training before returning to their home country to complete on-job training. Both domestic and international student numbers are dependent on local or international projections of required numbers of air traffic control employees.

# Summary of Results

## Statements of confidence on educational performance and capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **Highly Confident** in the educational performance and capability in self-assessment of **Airways Corporation of New Zealand Limited trading as Airways Training Centre for the following reasons:**

- Trainee pre-selection is rigorous and robust. It matches clearly articulated, well-understood criteria and prerequisites for success as an air traffic controller. There are always more applicants than places, both domestically and internationally, and selection numbers reflect industry needs. The majority of domestic trainees successfully complete the Diploma of Air Traffic Control. Since 2012, only four of 218 New Zealand-trained trainees have not completed.
- International students at the Palmerston North training centre complete theory and practical training before returning to their home country to complete on-job training and licensing. No international students trained in New Zealand are known to have failed to achieve licences in their own countries.
- Training is a combination of theory, practical and on-job training over two years, enabling students to apply their theoretical learning quickly in real-life scenarios. Trainers are experienced air traffic controllers. Trainees receive individual attention and daily feedback (both verbal and written) on progress that enables them to discuss and correct mistakes with their trainer or instructor in a timely way, contributing to improved practice.
- Successful domestic trainees are guaranteed employment in New Zealand and have options for international experience. They enter well-paid employment with a respected New Zealand corporate. International students also have guaranteed employment on their return home. The growth in international student numbers (from 35 in 2011 to 58 in 2016) is an indication of the high international regard for Airways Training Centre. Airways Training Centre maintains this reputation through excellent course completions, exemplary pastoral care and regular contact with representatives from the international students' home countries.
- There is greater emphasis on interpersonal and communication skills in training nowadays due to increased recognition of the impact of the high stress environment in which air traffic controllers operate. This is evident by including theory and discussion on 'soft skills' development in training, including the importance of self-care and recognition of stress. Pastoral care is available to all trainees, and seeking assistance is encouraged by Airways Training Centre and increasingly by employers.

- The senior management team has strong educational, business and strategic backgrounds and expertise. The increased education (compared with instructional) focus they bring has led to innovation around blended and e-learning opportunities and more structured support for training and trainers. This shift in emphasis has also opened up business opportunities and initiatives, particularly regarding international markets where management has achieved significant training contracts. While these initiatives are outside the scope of the Diploma of Air Traffic Control, they inform programme reviews through shared personnel and awareness of international trends and developments.
- Self-assessment across all levels of the organisation is structured, robust and informs ongoing changes. Trainees are constantly challenged to self-reflect and self-monitor, essential attributes for ensuring safety levels are maintained at a high standard in the air traffic control room. Instructors are reflective and highly invested in the industry's reputation for safety. They are supported by governance and management which is both knowledgeable and strategic and driven to maintain Airways Training Centre as a leader in the aviation industry, both in New Zealand and overseas.



# 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 programme is delivered as theory level 5 (classroom-based), practical level 6 (competency-based, in the simulator), and – for domestic trainees – level 7 (on-job training). The level 5 pass rate is 100 per cent for both domestic and international trainees. The level 6 pass rate is 80-85 per cent, and the level 7 pass rate is 100 per cent again. The majority of domestic trainees successfully complete the Diploma of Air Traffic Control.

International students complete theory and practical training before returning to their home country to complete on-job training and licensing. When training is in progress, regular reports are sent to the international customer (employer) on student progress and performance. No international students trained in New Zealand are known to have failed to achieve licences in their own countries.

A small number of trainees find the practical on-job training is not for them or that they are unable to gain a sufficient competency level to continue. Since 2012, four of 218 domestic and international trainees have not completed. Pathways for non-successful trainees are created, such as exiting at level 5 and finding employment with flight services.

Achievement rates – to level 7 – for New Zealand trainees have been consistently high over many years. These excellent outcomes are a function of rigorous pre-selection across a range of technical and personality attributes, effective instruction including theory and practice, and a clear graduate profile that reflects current and changing industry requirements. Stakeholders confirmed that Airways Training Centre trainees have the specialist technical knowledge, practical skills and personal attributes required for employment and to maintain the safety of air navigation services.

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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.

## 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**.

High value is placed by all stakeholders on the training and career opportunities for air traffic controllers. This is evidenced by the large numbers of applicants for limited training places. Achieving the air traffic controller licence guarantees employment with Airways New Zealand. The overall training period is relatively short (about 13 months), trainees are supported by a scholarship to subsidise training costs while training on the job, and then they can begin full-time paid employment. There is a clear career pathway including ongoing training towards licence and rating endorsements. International students have job placements on successful completion of their course in New Zealand. They also experience rigorous selection in their home countries. For example, for Spain there were 3,000 applicants for 10 places. International trainees perceive themselves as highly privileged to have the opportunity to be trained overseas (i.e. in New Zealand). This responsibility makes them highly motivated and contributes to the high success rates. The Saudi Arabian Cultural Mission sees Airways Training Centre as providing an excellent example of pastoral care, as does New Zealand Aid which continues to provide funding for some international student training.

Airways Training Centre is constantly assessing the extent to which training outcomes meet the workforce needs of Airways New Zealand and international clients. Regular contact with key stakeholders provides opportunities for communication and feedback about training needs, training delivery and trainee and graduate progress. Airways Training Centre training staff visit regional towers which provides opportunities to speak with on-job trainees, field instructors and recent graduates and to identify areas for improvement, such as the decision to send trainees to 'hub towers' to ensure they experience sufficient and similar levels of air traffic control.

There was also substantial evidence that management planning and reporting processes, including those required by the National Training Board, ensure that Airways Training Centre management and staff are well informed about stakeholder expectations and understand their role in the organisation and wider aviation industry. This ensures that the training plan is aligned to the wider organisation's objectives, where there is high-level accountability for achieving safe airways.

### 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**.

Trainee pre-selection is rigorous and robust. It matches clearly articulated, well-understood criteria and prerequisites for success as an air traffic controller. There are always more applicants than places, both domestically and internationally, and selection numbers reflect industry needs. The selection programme was developed internally by Airways New Zealand and is shared with and sold to overseas companies as the programme is recognised as highly effective in predicting successful trainees.

Air traffic control training is required to meet aviation and education industry standards as well as prospective employer requirements, both in New Zealand and overseas. International and domestic students receive one-to-one instruction. Improvements that have been made from international student feedback include changing the structure of lectures to include more language content, each student having a nominated contact person for pastoral care issues, and additional simulator and radar simulation suites so students have more time for practical application of skills.

Airways Training Centre works closely with the CAA and Airways New Zealand to ensure its training meets the regulatory and operational requirements of the industry. Air traffic control is an important job where safety is paramount. All stakeholders are invested in excellent training to maintain this record. There is no specific retirement age provided an individual meets all medical requirements. Regular refresher training is required to maintain currency.

The National Advisory Board comprises representatives of the training, operational and policy and standards divisions of Airways New Zealand. It provides advice and training needs analysis to management and governance, and oversees major changes to training and capital investment.

### 1.4 How effective is the teaching?

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

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

All instructors are qualified and highly experienced. They all have air traffic control licences and Airways Training Centre training, and most have international experience. Instructors are formally assessed by peers most years, but the nature

of the training means that they are under training scrutiny on the job, especially when they are training within the simulator environment. Trainees are visited in the field several times a year. These visits provide opportunities to keep current with industry conditions and emerging issues. The trainees are highly motivated and the instructors noted that trainee enthusiasm motivates both trainees and instructors to perform at capacity. A trainee can initiate a training review if there is a personal conflict with an instructor, but this does not happen often and most trainees benefit from different instructors who provide variety of instruction and knowledge sharing. Airways New Zealand also seconds operational staff to engage with the training to inform relevancy. Regular visits from the Christchurch training centre to the Palmerston North site, and internal moderation practices also ensure consistency of teaching and assessment practice across both sites. Service IQ confirmed that Airways Training Centre's competency-based training meets industry needs well.

The training simulator represents a compilation of conditions and environments that meet the requirements for New Zealand trainees, including scripted aircraft operations that reflect New Zealand operational realities. However, the simulator can also be adapted to reflect the conditions and environments and aircraft of international trainees' home countries, making it an excellent training tool for both domestic and international trainees.

Each student usually spends at least five hours per week on the simulator. Trainees get daily feedback (verbal and written) from the simulator instructors on periodic training reports about what went well and what did not. All practical exercises have measurable learning outcomes, and the instructor debriefs the trainee against these. The trainee brings their report with them when training on the simulator, and there is a process of ongoing follow-up and review. Every eight days the periodic training report is consolidated into a summary of progress for each trainee. Training mimics operational considerations with two summative assessments, and the final oral and practical assessment is awarded by a CAA examiner. Trainees, CAA and Airways New Zealand reported that trainees were well prepared for the operational environment.

Regular feedback is sought from trainees about the curriculum and teaching. Evaluations have been customised to meet different trainee preferences. For example, Saudi trainees prefer to give feedback on paper, while Hong Kong trainees prefer to give feedback electronically. While teamwork and an open environment is fostered at Airways Training Centre, some domestic trainees noted that during on-the-job training the feedback practices of instructors varied. One trainee was told by his instructor that he would only get feedback on his mistakes. This may be an area where greater support is required for instructors and trainees, to investigate more effective ways to provide feedback and improve trainee operational performance.

## 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**.

Trainees pay only a fraction of the cost of training and, once selected, are likely to be employees for life. The attrition rate is very low, therefore Airways Training Centre is very invested in the trainees' success. Strict entry criteria with selection software, interviews and ongoing technical and personal support maximise trainee achievement. The industry has tight oversight and reacts and investigates issues when they occur, such as safety concerns and infringements. Over the last few years, in response to a staff tragedy, there has been greater emphasis on human factors within the training and organisational environment. Trainees are now sent to hubs in one of Palmerston North, Dunedin, Ohakea or Napier to ensure consistent levels of aircraft traffic and a stronger network of appropriately trained instructors to ensure support of trainees. Once trainees are rated at their initial unit, they are formally employed.

International student numbers have grown in proportion to domestic numbers since the last EER in 2012. While the Palmerston North campus was originally set up to accommodate international (particularly Saudi) students after the Christchurch earthquake in 2010, it is now an established part of business as usual. These trainees have access to Massey University facilities. They undertake theoretical and practical training before returning to their home countries to complete on-job training, where they also have guaranteed employment. Airways Training Centre has a strong emphasis on pastoral care for international trainees. They organise regular social and local activities, and trainees must stay in a homestay for the first year to ensure they develop good conversational English. In addition, all trainees for whom English is a second language undertake an aviation English component of their course. This assists their training, which is in English, and provides English language skills for future employment options.

## 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**.

The combined educational and business expertise of senior staff has enabled Airways Training Centre to develop an excellent training programme and to advance business opportunities internationally. These initiatives inform the teaching and learning and vice versa. Initiatives include the training in Brisbane, the Puerto Rico campus and instructor exchanges with China. Airways Training Centre markets courses to air navigation service providers in the Middle East, Asia, the Pacific Region and Africa. Customer needs are established by face-to-face meetings, documented training proposals and training contracts that are regularly reviewed to maintain relevance and currency.

Governance, management and staff are actively involved in ensuring that Airways Training Centre manages its compliance accountabilities effectively, including regular monitoring of the Code of Compliance for the Pastoral Care of International Students (the Code). This is especially important as international student numbers have grown considerably since the previous EER and there has been a recent review of the code.

Significant work has begun on introducing blended learning into theoretical teaching components using both an e-learning platform and interactive online textbooks called airbooks. Airbooks can be accessed anytime and anywhere from a person's electronic device of choice. They have embedded videos and links which has been found to shorten the theory training time, allowing a trainee to get to the simulator stage of training faster.

Comprehensive and integrated strategic and business planning and reporting processes inform the allocation of resources to training activities, and annual targets ensure accountability for the quality, quantity, and cost of training. The evaluators found evidence of a strong focus on educational achievement at all levels of the organisation, and across divisions, reflecting the importance of training for Airways New Zealand's commercial success and reputation. Airways New Zealand is also responding strategically to changes in the aviation industry that have significant implications for air navigation service providers and air traffic controller training, for example the development of drones and unmanned aircraft. The organisational context of strong leadership, effective communication processes and an established culture of reflection indicates that Airways Training Centre is well positioned to engage constructively with stakeholders and to adjust its training provision as needs change.

## 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: 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**.

### 2.3 Focus area: Diploma of Air Traffic Control (Level 7)

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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