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External Evaluation and Review Report



Airways Corporation of New Zealand Limited

Date of report: 22 June 2021

About Airways Corporation of New Zealand Limited

Airways Training is the training arm of Airways Corporation of New Zealand, the national air navigation service provider and a state-owned enterprise. It offers international and domestic students a range of training in air traffic control delivered in New Zealand and Kuwait. Students gain internationally recognised industry certification.

Type of organisation:	Private training establishment (PTE)
Location:	26 Sir William Pickering Drive, Russley, Christchurch
Code of Practice signatory:	Yes
Number of students ¹ :	Domestic: 24 (20 equivalent full-time students in 2020); Māori one (4 per cent), Pasifika two (8 per cent); male 79 per cent International: 77 (64 equivalent full-time students in 2020); nationalities: Middle Eastern 73 (95 per cent); male 95 per cent
Number of staff:	15 full-time equivalents
TEO profile:	Airways Corporation of New Zealand (NZQA website)
Last EER outcome:	NZQA was Highly Confident in the educational performance and Highly Confident in the capability in self-assessment of the PTE at the last external evaluation and review (EER) conducted in September 2016.
Scope of evaluation:	New Zealand Diploma in Air Traffic Services (Level 6)
MoE number:	8455
NZQA reference:	C45342
Dates of EER visit:	28 and 29 April 2021

¹ Enrolments had increased considerably since the last EER; however, the COVID-19 pandemic brought a significant decrease in enrolments in 2020 and year-to-date 2021.

Summary of Results

Airways Training comprehensively meets the important needs of its domestic and international students, many business clients, regulators and the industry. It has continued to make improvements since the last EER, informed by typically high-quality self-assessment.

Highly Confident in educational performance

Ninety-eight per cent of the 483 enrolled students from 2016-2020 gained their internationally recognised air traffic control certification. Nearly all graduates work in the industry, gaining their operational competency rating. This is exceptional educational performance.

Airways Training has developed recognised industry expertise and tools that have been sold to international agencies. These tools include a highly effective student selection tool, digital learning resources and an air traffic navigation simulator.

Highly Confident in capability in self-assessment

Airways Training has developed a training approach that consistently produces competent air traffic controllers. Capable leadership and tutors, along with highly effective pastoral care, enable nearly every student to complete their studies. Educational standards are high. The management of compliance requirements is generally strong. The few gaps had minimal impact.

Airways Training, sitting within a wider organisation, has a corporate culture focused on student success and performance review. There is data-rich reporting, robust analysis, systematic review processes and clear performance measures. There have been some notable improvements since the last EER, informed by comprehensive and typically high-quality self-assessment.

Key evaluation question findings²

1.1 How well do students achieve?

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Excellent
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>International and domestic students enrol in air traffic control training offering internationally recognised industry certification and (in the focus area) a New Zealand framework qualification. There have been consistently very high course completions, with 471 (98 per cent) of 483 students completing their programme of study³ from 2016-2020.⁴ International, Māori, Pasifika⁵ and under 25-year-old domestic student completions were all high. There is reasonable evidence indicating that these rates are well above those of some comparable international air traffic controller training organisations.</p> <p>The PTE systemically monitors and robustly analyses any assessment not successfully completed, supporting nearly all students to reach the required standard. Students learn the industry-required knowledge, skills and attributes to be a competent air traffic controller. Internal moderation, observation of simulated performance, external examiners and nearly all graduates gaining (post-graduation) their operational ratings in the field, provide highly convincing evidence that these educational results are valid. These are exceptional achievement results.</p>
Conclusion:	Airways Training has a rich and nuanced understanding of achievement that supports the very high level of achievement. Nearly all students gain the knowledge, skills and attributes to become competent certified air traffic controllers.

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

³ Completions lead to highly valued international certification, and domestic students are also awarded NZQA qualifications.

⁴ See Appendix 1, Tables 1-4 for details.

⁵ There were very few Māori or Pasifika enrolments.

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

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Excellent
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>Airways Training’s primary purpose is to provide world-class training that meets the important needs of its students, the Airways Corporation of New Zealand, business clients (global air navigation service providers) and regulatory agencies. There is comprehensive evidence of Airways Training achieving this purpose well.</p> <p>Nearly every student who enrolls graduates and goes on to gain work and their internationally recognised operational ratings as competent air traffic controllers. This is an exceptional success rate, offering business clients a very high probability of a return on their training investment. Students gain certification and employment in their chosen professional role.</p> <p>Airways Training provides competent personnel to its primary stakeholder, the operational arm of Airways Corporation of New Zealand, enabling the corporation to provide industry-level air traffic navigation services. Airways Training has won competitive tenders to offer air traffic controller training to international air traffic navigation agencies. It was the first non-European country to gain European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) certification in 2015, which was renewed in 2020. Domestic and international enrolments (and income) have increased considerably since the last EER (prior to the COVID-19 impact)⁶, while key indicators of quality performance have remained high. These are high-value outcomes.</p> <p>There is strong evidence that Airways Training has contributed to developing new knowledge, digital tools and training approaches that some international agencies have bought and adopted. These include the US Federal Aviation Agency relicensing for a fifth year the PTE’s highly effective student selection tool, selling its locally developed air traffic navigation simulator (to Norway), and sales of its digital learning resources.</p>

⁶ Domestic students: 15 (2016) versus 137 (2019). International students: 58(2016) versus 308 (2019).

Conclusion:	Airways Training offers high-value outcomes to its students, business clients and key stakeholders. The value has considerably improved, and the PTE fulfils its core purpose well.
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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:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Excellent
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>Airways Training has a highly effective training model. External regulatory audits verify that the training meets Civil Aviation Authority of New Zealand, European Union and international aviation industry quality standards. An internal 2019 audit also found it met requirements, while identifying identified opportunities for improvements. These audits, students demonstrating their competency on course and (after graduation) in the field, and the use of external examiners attest to the effectiveness of the PTE's competency-based training approach.</p> <p>Regulators set the content requirements; however, Airways Training has developed various fit-for-purpose tools, resources and simulators that effectively support training delivery. An example is the student selection process, which identifies the core competencies required to complete the training. This has accurately predicted potential student success, with 98 per cent of the students, who had no prior experience or knowledge, completing the training. This an exceptionally close matching of the applicants' aspirations and the training. The PTE's facilities and equipment are up to date and often innovative. It uses digital resources which enabled them to effectively offer remote learning during the COVID restrictions. Airways Training is progressively moving delivery 'to the cloud', improving the accessibility of the training.</p> <p>The risk of academic misconduct is low. Observation and demonstration of performance is ongoing and regularly monitored. Field operations are well integrated into the training. Theory-based assessment is closely monitored. Internal moderation processes are sound and supported by effective external audits. Student/stakeholder feedback seems to identify</p>

	that some assessments are not clear. Amendments have been made; however, a more systematic review may be warranted.
Conclusion:	The programme design and delivery assessment activities match well the needs of students, business clients and regulators. There is a systematic focus on quality improvements, which is reflected in ongoing innovations.

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

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Excellent
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>Airways Training has tutors with relevant qualifications and considerable experience. They share a professional ethic focused on each student successfully meeting the industry standards of competency. At the same time, the assessment approach allows for human error, offering opportunities to re-sit assessments if required. There is systematic monitoring of achievement milestones. Tutors review and formally report if a student's performance is of concern and develop strategies for success. The low student-tutor ratio enables the training and mentoring to be responsive to individual needs, including clear feedback on performance. Student feedback is positive about their capabilities and the pastoral care they receive.</p> <p>The student selection process means the students are self-motivated learners and able to succeed. Only 12 (2 per cent) of 483 students did not complete their programme of study during the five years from 2016-2020⁷; this is an exceptionally low rate. There is an established and systematic approach to pastoral care for the many international as well as domestic students. For example, training has been modified to better meet the cultural needs of the Saudi students. The Saudi Arabian class representative model seems to be an approach to explore with other cohorts. The pastoral care staff are dedicated and have sound relationships with a reputable homestay partner and the Saudi Arabian embassy. No gaps emerged during this enquiry. The reviews of the regulatory codes of pastoral care were sound, though there is an opportunity for more staff and student feedback and input.</p>

⁷ Refer to Appendix 1 for details.

Conclusion:	Airways Training has consistently enabled nearly all students to stay involved in and complete their learning. The overall self-assessment of student support is robust; the few gaps have little impact.
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1.5 How effective are governance and management in supporting educational achievement?

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Excellent
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>The capable leadership of Airways Training receives significant and wide-ranging support from the parent organisation, Airways Corporation of New Zealand. There are clear, articulated strategies, plans, targets and robust performance reporting.⁸ Enrolments and revenue have grown considerably, yet quality standards has been maintained or enhanced. There have been some significant innovations in the training and related products. The PTE is well resourced with equipment and capable staff who have opportunities for relevant professional development. That said, the August 2020 staff survey indicated some possible areas for improvement. The PTE has retained most of its capability, despite the significant impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the aviation industry and its recent activity.</p> <p>Airways Training, sitting within the wider organisation, has a corporate culture focused on student success and performance review. This culture is illustrated by its data-rich reporting, robust analysis, typically systematic review processes and clear performance measures. This self-review informs planning and decision-making. There are a few gaps, but none are significant.</p>
Conclusion:	Airways Training leadership has been effective in supporting consistent and often exceptional educational performance. There have been some notable improvements, informed by comprehensive and high-quality self-assessment.

⁸ Though reporting on the offshore Kuwait site could be made more visible.

1.6 How effectively are important compliance accountabilities managed?

Performance:	Good
Self-assessment:	Good
Findings and supporting evidence:	<p>Airways Training operates in the high-risk and highly regulated air traffic control sector. It has a strong culture of prioritising safety and minimising risk. The PTE's systems and people have been effective in managing key compliance requirements. The key evidence that supports this finding includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Airways Training met Civil Aviation Authority of New Zealand Rule 141 requirements in November 2020, certifying it to conduct air traffic services training courses and assessments. • Its training also met the certification requirements of the International Civil Aviation Organization, the European Union Aviation Safety Agency, as well as various individual country regulatory requirements. • A 2018 Tertiary Education Commission audit found the PTE complied with 19 requirements, with just one requiring improvement. • Airways Training completed all required NZQA attestations and submissions in a timely fashion. • The PTE proactively contacted NZQA when it suspended delivery in 2020; however, NZQA identified that student fees had been drawn down incorrectly from the Public Trust. This matter was promptly rectified. • A sound review of the interim domestic Code⁹ and international Code¹⁰ identified no gaps. However, pastoral and teaching staff were not involved in the reviews. • A sample of international student enrolment files found they met the international Code requirements.

⁹ [The Education \(Pastoral Care of Domestic Tertiary Students\) Interim Code of Practice 2019](#)

¹⁰ [The Education \(Pastoral Care of International Students\) Code of Practice 2016 \(including Amendments 2019\)](#)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This enquiry identified that the PTE has only been reporting unit standard results and awarding qualifications for its domestic students and not all students as required by NZQA Consent to Assess Rules. While this is a technical infraction, there has been no discernible impact on international students and stakeholders, who seek the international (and not NZQA) certification. • The PTE leadership said there have been no significant legal or ethical issues since last EER. This enquiry found no evidence contradicting this statement.
Conclusion:	The PTE has been mostly effective in managing and reviewing its key compliance requirements.

Focus Areas

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

2.1 Focus area: New Zealand Diploma in Air Traffic Services (Level 6)

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Excellent

2.2 Focus area: International student support and wellbeing

Performance:	Excellent
Self-assessment:	Excellent

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 Airways Corporation of New Zealand Limited:

- Investigate the significance of student feedback that some assessments were not clear.
- Include more staff and a clearer focus on performance reporting when reviewing the domestic and international pastoral care codes.
- Report more explicitly on the performance of the Kuwait delivery site.
- Report all unit standard results and award NZQA qualifications to all students.

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. Domestic student course completion rates for NZQA-approved programmes 2016-2020

Years	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
All	97	98	99	94	99
Māori	100	100	100	100	100
Pasifika	-	96	100	100	100
Under 25 years	98	99	100	100	100

Source: Airways Corporation of New Zealand data¹¹

Table 2. Domestic student NZQA qualification completion rates 2016-2020

Years	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
All	97	100	98	95	96
Māori	100	100	100	100	100
Pasifika	-	96	100	100	100
Under 25 years	98	99	100	98	100

Source: Airways Corporation of New Zealand data⁹

Table 3. Domestic programme non-completions 2016-2020 by ethnicity and age (total enrolments)

	All	Māori	Pasifika	Under 25
2016-2020 Total	138	1 (7)	0 (4)	1 (60)
Non-completion rate	-	14%	0%	2%

Source: Airways Corporation of New Zealand data

Table 4. Programme non-completions and completions 2016-2020 – domestic, international and all student count (total enrolled students)

	Domestic	International	Total
Total non-completions	6 (136)	6 (347)	12 (483)
Non completion rate	4%	2%	2%
Total completions	130 (136)	341 (347)	471 (483)
Completion rate	96%	98%	98%

Source: Airways Corporation of New Zealand data

¹¹ This data aligns with Tertiary Education Commission published data.

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 fraud¹²
- 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.

¹² 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/>.

NZQA

Ph 0800 697 296

E qaadmin@nzqa.govt.nz

www.nzqa.govt.nz