

Report of External Evaluation and Review

Ardmore Flying School Ltd

Confident in educational performance

Confident in capability in self-assessment

Date of report: 15 August 2014

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MoE Number: 8638
NZQA Reference: C14715
Dates of EER visit: 6 and 7 May 2014

This report is draft only and is subject to checking by Ardmore Flying School Ltd for factual accuracy.

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:	Ardmore Flying School Ltd (AFS)
Type:	Private training establishment (PTE)
Location:	Harvard Lane, Ardmore Airport, Auckland
Delivery sites:	As above
First registered:	21 October 1991
Courses currently delivered:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• New Zealand Diploma in Aviation (Aeroplane and Helicopter) (Flight Instruction) (Level 6)• New Zealand Diploma in Aviation (Aeroplane and Helicopter) (Airline Preparation) (Level 6)• Private Pilot Licence – Aeroplane (Level 3)
Code of Practice signatory:	Yes; approved for students aged 18 upwards
Number of students:	Domestic: 198 students (50 EFTS (equivalent full-time students)) International: 14 students from a wide range of source countries
Number of staff:	35 full-time and part-time staff
Scope of active accreditation:	Consent to assess in the domains of: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Aircraft Operation to level 6• Aviation Core to level 4

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Distinctive characteristics:	<p>AFS is the biggest flying school in the Auckland region. It has been established for over 50 years.</p> <p>In addition to domestic students funded by the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC), AFS enrolls international students, predominantly from India.</p>
Recent significant changes:	<p>AFS was, for several years, offering the NMIT Diploma in Aviation Science (Level 6) under a partnership arrangement with Nelson Marlborough Institute of Technology (NMIT). This partnership ceased at the end of 2012, at which time AFS became directly funded by the TEC. By agreement, some students were able to continue study towards the NMIT qualification in 2013. The change in qualification and funding source, and the substantial reduction in funded places, has led to a number of anomalies in completions data and significant challenges for AFS. This phenomenon has to varying degrees affected all flying schools who were party to NMIT partnership arrangements, but AFS is among the worst affected.</p>
Previous quality assurance history:	<p>This is AFS's second external evaluation and review (EER). The previous EER, held in March 2013, resulted in summative judgements of Not Yet Confident in educational performance and Not Yet Confident in capability in self-assessment.</p>
Other	<p>The certification and operation of organisations conducting aviation training and assessments in New Zealand is prescribed under Part 141 of Civil Aviation Rules governed by the Civil Aviation Authority of New Zealand (CAA). All theory and practical (flight test) assessments are conducted independently by Aviation Services Ltd, which operates under licence to CAA. All pilot licences are issued by CAA.</p>

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2. Scope of external evaluation and review

The scope for the EER consisted of the mandatory focus areas:

- Governance, management and strategy
- International student support

In addition, the following focus area was selected:

- New Zealand Diploma in Aviation including all levels and strands delivered by AFS

The above focus area encapsulates the majority of the teaching and programme delivery activities of AFS. The New Zealand Diploma in Aviation (Level 6) provides flight training up to a Commercial Pilot Licence with an Instrument Rating. In the second year of their training, students are split into two streams:

- Airline Preparation stream – including the Airline Transport Pilot Licence (ATPL) theory examinations.
- Instructor stream – including the qualification required to become a Category C flight instructor.

3. Conduct of external evaluation and review

All external evaluation and reviews are conducted in accordance with NZQA's published policies and procedures. The methodology used is described fully in the web document Policy and Guidelines for the Conduct of External Evaluation and Review available at: <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers-partners/registration-and-accreditation/external-evaluation-and-review/policy-and-guidelines-eer/introduction>. The TEO has an opportunity to comment on the accuracy of this report, and any submissions received are fully considered by NZQA before finalising the report.

The EER was conducted in early May 2014. Prior to this EER, the lead evaluator discussed the visit by telephone and email with the chief executive and deputy chief flying instructor. A two-day EER visit was made to the AFS site at Ardmore Airport, where the evaluation team, consisting of two evaluators, reviewed a range of documentation and met with the chief executive, chief flying instructor, two deputy chief flying instructors, the business development manager, student support coordinator, two groups of instructors and two groups of students.

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Summary of Results

Statement of confidence on educational performance

NZQA is **Confident** in the educational performance of **Ardmore Flying School**.

Key reasons for this include:

- Students at AFS are achieving good results (refer Findings 1.1 for more detailed figures). Overall, AFS's own data indicates that course completion averages over 95 per cent¹ against a sector average of 84 per cent.²
- Eighty-seven per cent of domestic graduates from the last 10 years of AFS programmes are now working in the aviation industry (refer Findings 1.2). AFS is in regular contact with many of its graduates, and the training outcomes indicate that the organisation is preparing students well for employment in the aviation industry.
- AFS staff engage well with their industry at both local and national levels and are valued for the positive contribution they make.
- The EER team found consistent evidence of good teaching throughout the organisation (refer Findings 1.4). More focus on providing opportunities for instruction staff to undertake ongoing adult education training would benefit the teaching delivery and outcomes.
- AFS has improved its student support and is embedding sound student support structures that are appropriate to the needs of both international and domestic students (refer Findings 1.5).
- The organisation is very well managed and has a clear philosophy and purpose. The recent expansion of the AFS management team has added strength to the organisation. The training at AFS is well resourced and AFS manages its resources effectively.
- AFS has shown considerable improvement in its processes and procedures since its last evaluation. However, it is still too early to determine the impact of these improvements on learner outcomes.

¹ Qualification completion over the past two years is difficult to accurately determine because of the complexities of the transition between qualifications.

² It should be noted that because at least 12 aviation providers are experiencing similar challenges reconciling achievement data, the sector average may also be unreliable.

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Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **Confident** in the capability in self-assessment of **Ardmore Flying School**.

Key reasons for this include:

- Records and discussions indicate that self-assessment has improved since the first EER and is beginning to be practised and embedded across the organisation.
- Although AFS, predominantly through its leadership, has wide and positive engagement with the aviation industry, a more systematic approach to engagement at multiple levels of the organisation is required, including gathering feedback from industry and graduates and using the information to bring about useful improvements to demonstrate excellence in self-assessment.
- AFS has begun to put in place good systems to gather and collate feedback from learners. The quality and validity of the information collected is sound, and the information is used to inform improvements to teaching practice and course delivery.
- Staff at AFS demonstrate a good understanding of the factors that lead to student achievement. They regularly formally and informally discuss and assess ideas for improving achievement and making the courses more useful and enjoyable for students. The staffing structure at AFS is designed to facilitate this. Staff members are well supported by management and have plenty of opportunities for reflection on their role, which benefits students through improved teaching techniques, student support and graduate outcomes.
- AFS has begun to follow through on opportunities for improvement identified in the last EER. The evaluation team believes that as self-assessment processes continue to be implemented at AFS, significant and meaningful ongoing improvements will result. AFS is aware that the good start in improving self-assessment processes needs to be fully embedded as a planned and coordinated approach across the organisation.

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Findings³

1.1 How well do learners achieve?

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

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

Based on the information supplied by AFS, the average course completion for AFS students was over 95 per cent, as shown in Table 1.

	2011	2012	2013
Course completion as reported in TEC educational performance indicator data	97%	99%	95%

Achievement rates for students taught by AFS on behalf of NMIT are difficult to track because of the complex transitions to the new qualification and students transferring their enrolment from NMIT to AFS. However, there is no reason to believe that rates would be any different from the general profile of AFS completions. AFS has a very strong focus on, and commitment to, student achievement. The students who have studied at AFS have achieved good results.

As mentioned, AFS was, for several years, offering the NMIT Diploma in Aviation Science under a partnership arrangement with NMIT. This partnership ceased at the end of 2012, at which time AFS became directly funded by the TEC. By agreement, some students were able to continue study towards the NMIT qualification in 2013.

The change in qualification and funding source and the substantial reduction in funded places have led to a number of anomalies in completions data. Despite significant challenges for AFS, the PTE has done their utmost to maintain the best interests of students throughout the transition.

The organisation has worked hard over the past two years to ensure that students have the opportunity to complete. The limited places available under the reduced funding cap has been addressed in several ways:

- Disaggregation of courses so that some students could continue their studies through NMIT while others transitioned to AFS

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

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- Some students spreading their study across several years
- A few students splitting their study between NMIT and AFS in the same year.

As a consequence, it is difficult to accurately measure qualification completion during this period.

Staff at AFS demonstrated a good understanding of the factors that lead to student achievement, and formally and informally analyse and discuss ideas for improving achievement. The pyramid structure of the organisation (whereby each Category C instructor has responsibility for three to five students, each Category B instructor has responsibility for three to five Category C instructors, and so on) enables close supervision and support for both students and staff. AFS also has a compulsory monthly staff meeting where progress and achievement of students is the main topic of conversation.

AFS has historically enrolled several Pasifika students each year – both domestic and international. Although AFS has not formally monitored Pasifika achievement, according to anecdotal evidence from AFS staff, Pasifika students have been retained and have achieved at similar levels as the cohort as a whole. Māori student participation has traditionally been quite low. In line with commitments to the TEC, AFS is in the early stages of developing strategies that will improve the participation and achievement of both Māori and Pasifika students.

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 **Good**.

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

Of the 483 AFS domestic graduates from 2004 to 2013, 412 were in aviation-related employment or in further study towards aviation related qualifications one year after completion of their Commercial Pilot Licence. Refer to Table 2 for detailed figures.

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Table 2. Graduate employment, 2004-2013 (domestic students)					
	No of Commercial Pilot Licence graduates	Employed	Further study	Total	%
2004	29	17	0	17	59%
2005	40	38	0	38	95%
2006	46	41	0	41	89%
2007	40	37	0	37	93%
2008	52	42	3	45	87%
2009	62	32	18	50	81%
2010	58	23	22	45	78%
2011	58	30	23	53	91%
2012	57	26	21	47	82%
2013	41	6	33	39	95%
Total	483	292	120	412	85%

AFS considers that this good level of graduate employment is due to the focus that AFS has put on preparing graduates for the aviation workforce and the reputation that AFS has in the aviation sector. AFS has also recently begun a programme to better prepare graduates for employment through interview practice and CV writing.

AFS staff have recently begun to conduct exit meetings with every graduating student to ascertain their destination. AFS is making good use of social media for ongoing engagement with graduates and their employers to gain feedback about how well the programme prepared them for work or further education. Information gained from this engagement is gathered, but only recently has it been systematically analysed and discussed.

International students are gaining formal CAA licence qualifications. Although a small number choose to apply for a work permit in New Zealand, the majority return to their home countries and gain employment as pilots following graduation. Accurate employment figures for international graduates have been difficult for AFS to ascertain, but the organisation is exploring ways to maintain engagement with at least some international graduates.

AFS also adds value in its community by, for instance, supporting the Walsh Memorial Scout Flying School in providing aircraft at reduced cost and instructors at no cost. AFS also regularly supports the Air Training Corps and often donates trial flights to South Auckland community organisations to auction for fundraising.

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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 **Good**.

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

AFS staff engage well with the aviation sector, and stakeholders value the contribution they make to the industry. The chief executive has ongoing interaction with stakeholders through the Aviation Industry Association, the Ardmore Aerodrome Committee, CAA and the aviation network. He purposefully seeks feedback from AFS stakeholders. Other staff members engage through their own networks and through their interaction with CAA and Aviation Services Ltd. While the various engagements provide valuable information, AFS should now adopt a more formal process for analysing, discussing and summarising this feedback across and down the organisation, so that it can be more systematically and effectively used to inform improvements.

The overall structure of the Diploma in Aviation programme at AFS is designed to have students complete the theory component of the qualification before starting practical flying. AFS reports that it has adopted this structure because under the previous mixed approach, students tended to focus on their flying at the expense of the theory components. While this structure has the benefit of ensuring that students are able to determine their capability to complete the theory components before making the substantial financial commitment associated with practical flying, it is worth noting that another provider who has better overall completion rates advocates strongly that the theory and practice of flying is best taught in an integrated mode.

The systematic approach by the teaching staff to meeting the individual goals of every student is a strong feature of the organisation. AFS has a number of instructors available and the deputy chief flying instructor ensures that instructors are matched to the learning styles of individual students. Students remain with that instructor for the duration of their training. Both students and staff commented that they liked this regime as it enabled them to develop strong relationships, and instructors were able to become very familiar with the needs and learning styles of individual students. Students are periodically checked by a Category B instructor to ensure that their training is on track, and feedback from these checks is shared with both the student and (Category C) instructor.

AFS has recently put in place an improved system for gathering feedback from students. Student evaluations are conducted to a regular schedule and gather students' feedback on their experiences of the programmes, including programme content and delivery, facilities and staff effectiveness. The system is designed to ensure that information is used to bring about useful improvements to teaching and programme design. This system is new and the benefits from it are yet to be fully realised.

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1.4 How effective is the teaching?

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

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

There is clear evidence of good teaching practice at AFS. All the staff interviewed were enthusiastic and passionate about the organisation, the curriculum and their teaching, and they believe they are well supported by management. The organisational structure at AFS enables close monitoring of student performance and the effectiveness of instruction.

Staff are well qualified, with Category A, B and C instructors on permanent staff. Although they have extensive industry and professional experience, and an obvious passion and ability to engage students, only one of the current instruction staff holds an adult teaching qualification. The evaluators have suggested to AFS that this is an area for professional development for instructors. The evaluation team believes that stronger policy and practice is needed in this area. Sending instructors on short courses on adult teaching⁴ or encouraging them to complete formal qualifications would better enable good teaching practice.

The organisation has robust selection and induction processes for new instructors which include observations, peer teaching and a 'buddy' support system. AFS is beginning to openly address the sector-wide challenge that most instructors are instructing as a means to increase their flying hours to better qualify them for employment, rather than seeing instruction as a viable career path. Instructors are employed at AFS on the understanding that they are committed to at least three years of instruction.

Given that all summative assessment is through external examination, AFS does not require a moderation system. The course director has found that by closely monitoring examination results and matching them to the instructors, he is able to identify and act upon trends, positive or negative, that may indicate good practice or areas requiring improvement.

Students reported that they received timely, accurate and supportive feedback on their progress from AFS staff. Students are debriefed by their instructor after every flight to identify what the student did well, what they did less well, and where improvements could be made, either in the student's performance or AFC's instruction. In addition to their logbook, every student has a very detailed record book, which includes achievements and running records. The record book gives

⁴ Courses and workshops are offered in Auckland by Ako Aotearoa.

students a detailed record of how they are progressing and provides handover notes in case of a change of flight instructor.

AFS has a management and peer observation programme for its instructors. The performance of the teaching staff is formally reviewed on an annual basis, but this does not preclude regular and ongoing feedback of a formative nature. Teaching staff spoke about how they share ideas, experiences and knowledge through their daily interaction. Regular formalised staff meetings centred on teaching practice would be useful.

1.5 How well are learners guided and supported?

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

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

There is a designated support staff member with 24-hour phone contact should the students require assistance when away from the site. Accommodation for international students is managed in-house by the international student coordinator. The coordinator visits all accommodation sites on a regular cycle to inspect them and evaluate suitability.

The international student coordinator has overall responsibility for ensuring that Code of Practice requirements are met. Although the present incumbent is a recent appointment to AFS, she has Code of Practice experience with a previous employer and has attended professional development offered by the Code Office. The organisation only recently put in place a schedule for self-review of its compliance with the code.

International students receive a comprehensive orientation programme in their first week of study. Pre-enrolment information is comprehensive and designed to ensure that students make an informed decision before committing to a significant personal and financial investment. AFS has structured the programme so that the Private Pilot Licence component is self-funded by the students and must be completed before they can begin to draw down on their student loan.⁵ AFS has found that this system helps avoid the situation where students have committed to large student loans, then find that they have insufficient private funding to complete their qualifications.

AFS has detailed and robust procedures for resolving complaints. Feedback from students was that any complaint or feedback was addressed reasonably promptly and appropriately.

⁵ Student loans available through Study Link do not cover the full cost of aviation training, so aviation students are required to self-fund approximately 20 per cent of their training costs.

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

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

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

AFS is a privately owned and operated aviation training provider with a clear set of goals and objectives. As one of New Zealand's biggest domestic aviation training providers, AFS was particularly adversely affected by the reduction in funded training places in 2012. AFS says the degree to which the organisation and the students were affected was partially due to the scale of the reduction and partially due to the way in which the then management of AFS responded to the changes. This resulted in significant over-delivery in 2012, which led to an even more acute effect in 2013. The situation has become a daily challenge for the present management. They can be complimented for the way in which they are committed to enabling every student to complete their study, at times to the detriment of the organisation and certainly to the detriment of 'tidy' educational performance data.

The organisation has recently developed and is embedding effective systems for monitoring student achievement and supporting staff to improve educational achievement. AFS management recognises that the key to success of the business lies in the success of the students and the value they gain from their training. AFS actively supports strategies to increase student achievement and to support students to meet their employment goals. The recent significant investment in online learning resources is testimony to the commitment of management to educational performance.

AFS has employed very highly qualified and experienced staff, who it manages effectively and actively develops. Performance management systems are in place and staff are provided with regular feedback on their performance. The organisation is well equipped with physical and learning resources for the number of students that it currently has. There are systems in place to ensure there are always sufficient resources, mainly aircraft and instructors, to meet the needs of the students.

The recent expansion of the management team at AFS has brought some highly experienced aviation and educational leadership into the decision-making body. Self-assessment is being well led by management, but is yet to be universally understood and adopted throughout the organisation. The next challenge for AFS is to sustain and increase the current levels of education outcomes by embedding systematic, whole-of-organisation analysis and ensuing action from self-assessment activities.

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Focus Areas

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

2.1 Focus area: Governance, management and strategy

The rating in this focus area for educational performance is **Good**.

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

2.2 Focus area: International students

The rating in this focus area for educational performance is **Good**.

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

2.3 Focus area: New Zealand Diploma in Aviation (Level 6)

The rating in this focus area for educational performance is **Good**.

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

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Recommendations

NZQA recommends that Ardmore Flying School Limited:

- Ensure that self-assessment processes are formalised through regular and organisation-wide, systemic engagement with internal and external stakeholders, and improvements are documented.
- Develop strategies for the recruitment, effective teaching and success of Māori and Pasifika learners.
- Explore and take up opportunities for professional networking with other training providers to help AFS staff gain a more in-depth understanding of self-assessment in practice.
- Consider opportunities for benchmarking performance against other providers within the sector.
- Investigate and effect ongoing opportunities for instructors to develop their teaching practice.
- Explore and implement ways to maintain engagement with at least some international graduates.

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Appendix

Regulatory basis for external evaluation and review

External evaluation and review is conducted according to the External Evaluation and Review (EER) Rules 2013, which are made by NZQA under section 253 of the Education Act 1989 and approved by the NZQA Board and the Minister for Tertiary Education, Skills and Employment.

Self-assessment and participation in external evaluation and review are requirements for maintaining accreditation to provide an approved programme for all TEOs other than universities. The requirements are set through the NZQF Programme Approval and Accreditation Rules 2013, which are also made by NZQA under section 253 of the Education Act 1989 and approved by the NZQA Board and the Minister for Tertiary Education, Skills and Employment.

In addition, the Private Training Establishment Registration Rules 2013 require registered private training establishments to undertake self-assessment and participate in external evaluation and review, in accordance with the External Evaluation and Review Rules (EER) 2013, as a condition of maintaining registration. The Private Training Establishment Registration Rules 2013 are also made by NZQA under section 253 of the Education Act 1989 and approved by the NZQA Board and the Minister for Tertiary Education, Skills and Employment.

NZQA is responsible for ensuring non-university TEOs continue to comply with the rules after the initial granting of approval and accreditation of programmes and/or registration. The New Zealand Vice-Chancellors' Committee (NZVCC) has statutory responsibility for compliance by universities.

This report reflects the findings and conclusions of the external evaluation and review process, conducted according to the External Evaluation and Review (EER) Rules 2013.

The report identifies strengths and areas for improvement in terms of the organisation's educational performance and capability in self-assessment.

External evaluation and review reports are one contributing piece of information in determining future funding decisions where the organisation is a funded TEO subject to an investment plan agreed with the Tertiary Education Commission.

External evaluation and review reports are public information and are available from the NZQA website (www.nzqa.govt.nz).

The External Evaluation and Review (EER) Rules 2013 are available at <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/assets/About-us/Our-role/Rules/EER-Rules.pdf>, while information about the conduct and methodology for external evaluation and review can be found at <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers-partners/external-evaluation-and-review/policy-and-guidelines-eer/introduction/>.

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NZQA

Ph 0800 697 296

E qaadmin@nzqa.govt.nz

www.nzqa.govt.nz

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