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Report of External Evaluation and Review

Nelson Aviation College Limited

Highly Confident in educational performance

Highly Confident in capability in self-assessment

Date of report: 22 June 2016

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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:	Nelson Aviation College Limited (NAC)
Type:	Private training establishment (PTE)
First registered:	4 December 1990
Location:	Motueka Aerodrome, Queen Victoria Street, Motueka
Delivery sites:	As above plus a supplementary site for Instrument Flight Rules (IFR) training at Nelson Airport, McLaren Drive, Nelson
Courses currently delivered:	Basic Gas Turbine Commercial Pilot Licence (CPL) – Aeroplane Instructor Rating (IR) - Aeroplane Instrument Rating Theory Senior Commercial (SCPL) Pilot Theory Integrated CPL/SCPL/IR Private Pilot Licence (PPL) – Aeroplane NZ Diploma in Aviation – Airline Preparation NZ Diploma in Aviation – Flight Instructor NZ Diploma in Aviation – General Aviation
Code of Practice signatory:	Yes
Number of students:	48 Domestic – (42 male and 6 female), 2 Southeast Asian, 44 New Zealand European, 2 Māori 12 International – (8 male and 4 female), 1 United Kingdom, 5 Vanuatu, 3 Papua New Guinea, 2

	West Papua, 1 Singapore.
Number of staff:	15 full-time and 6 part-time
Scope of active accreditation:	Domains and unit standards in Aviation up to, and including, level 6.
Distinctive characteristics:	<p>NAC is one of four flying schools in New Zealand chosen by Air New Zealand (AirNZ) as Preferred Flying Training Organisations (PFTOs). This means that NAC's graduates are preferred over graduates of other aviation schools when AirNZ are recruiting new pilots.</p> <p>NAC are currently subcontracting delivery of Unit Standard 27259 <i>Demonstrate knowledge and readiness for airline multi-crew flying operations</i> to the Air New Zealand aviation Institute for the New Zealand Diploma in Aviation (Aeroplane) – Airline Preparation strand.</p> <p>Later this year, the arrangement will reverse: NAC will become the sole aviation training provider contracted by AirNZ to deliver unit standard 27259 on their behalf.</p>
Recent significant changes:	<p>In August 2014, NAC ceased helicopter training due to lower student numbers.</p> <p>For several years, NAC was offering the NMIT Diploma in Aviation Science (level 6) under a partnership arrangement with Nelson Marlborough Institute of Technology (NMIT). This partnership ended in 2011 due to the review of the training in the aviation sector.</p> <p>Since 2012 NAC have been directly funded by the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC). The change from one qualification and funding source to another has led to some anomalies in completion data in 2012 and 2013.</p>
Previous quality assurance history:	NAC's previous EER was held in April 2012. It resulted in judgements of Highly Confident in educational performance and Confident in capability in self-assessment.
Other:	The certification and operation of organisations conducting aviation training and assessments in New Zealand is prescribed under Part 141 of Civil

Aviation Rules. These rules are 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.

NAC's authorisation under Part 141 was renewed by CAA in December 2014. This renewal lasts for five years.

2. Scope of external evaluation and review

The scope for the external evaluation and review (EER) consisted of the mandatory focus area:

- Governance, management, and strategy (support for international students was included in this focus area)

In addition, the following focus area was selected:

- New Zealand Diploma in Aviation, including all levels and strands delivered by NAC.

The above focus area includes all of NAC's teaching and programme delivery activities. The NZ 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, NAC students are split into three streams:

- General aviation stream – including GPS, dangerous goods, air operations and aerobatic flight.
- Airline preparation stream - including the Airline Transport Pilot Licence (ATPL) theory examinations and a component in the Multi Crew environment.
- Instructor stream - including the qualification required to become a C-Category (C-CAT) Flight Instructor.

Since students from all three streams are taught as a single cohort, but have individual learning plans, it was considered appropriate to include all activities in the scope.

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 external evaluation and review (EER) was conducted in late April 2016. Prior to this EER, the lead evaluator visited the site and discussed the visit with the chief executive and the quality and finance manager, who was the organisation's contact for the EER.

Two evaluators made a one-and-a-half-day EER visit to the NAC site at Motueka airport. The evaluation team reviewed an extensive range of documentation and met with:

- the chief executive officer (CEO)
- the chief flying instructor (CFI)
- ground training manager
- the quality and finance manager
- student support co-ordinators
- two groups of instructors
- two groups of students.

The evaluation team also spoke with a range of stakeholders, both in New Zealand and overseas, by telephone and Skype.

The evaluation team is confident that they interviewed a sufficient range of staff, stakeholders and students for evaluation and review purposes.

During the site visit NAC provided the EER team with a range of operational documentation, including:

- strategic planning materials
- minutes of management meetings
- quality management policies
- enrolment information and policies
- records of student achievement
- student evaluations of programmes and teaching

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- collated analysis of student satisfaction levels
- course design
- delivery and assessment materials.

This documentation complemented the self-assessment information that had been pre-submitted by the TEO. The evaluators reviewed all the materials the TEO provided.

Summary of Results

Statement of confidence on educational performance

NZQA is **Highly Confident** in the educational performance and **Highly Confident** in the capability in self-assessment of **Nelson Aviation College Limited**.

The students who have studied at NAC have achieved excellent results. For instance, since NAC began delivering the NZ Diploma of Aviation on its own, course completion has averaged 95 per cent. In 2016, all of the thirty-three students currently enrolled in the NZ Diploma in Aviation are on track to successfully complete their qualification on time.

NAC provide good guidance and preparation for employment in the aviation industry. Eighty-six per cent of graduates of the NAC-delivered NZ Diploma in Aviation are now working within the aviation industry, both in New Zealand and internationally.

Highly effective processes contributing to NAC's excellent outcomes include:

- effective needs assessment and the tailoring of their training programmes to the current and future needs that industry identify. Staff and management are closely attuned to the present and future needs of the students and the aviation profession
- training in appropriate contexts for industry and student needs. Stakeholders confirm that NAC pilots are particularly well prepared for employment
- staff across all levels of the organisation are in regular contact with graduates. The results of this contact indicate that the organisation is preparing students well for employment in the aviation industry and/or as private pilots
- instruction delivered by experienced, engaging teachers who use their own flying experience and practical scenarios to ensure the training is relevant and interesting
- excellent student guidance and support provided on a one-to-one basis.

NAC has established a very reflective process of self-assessment across the organisation. There is also a culture that encourages students, staff and external stakeholders to discuss their performance and put forward ideas for improvement.

This information is then systematically used by NAC to make organisational improvements, as well as to inform course structure, content and delivery. These improvements ultimately result in improved outcomes for students.

In summary, NZQA is highly confident in both the educational performance and self-assessment capability of NAC. There is clear and comprehensive evidence that NAC is providing quality education and training that leads to positive outcomes for the majority of its students.

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The organisation is well managed and has a clear philosophy and purpose that is reflected throughout the operation. The training is well resourced and NAC uses its resources effectively.

NAC are a professional and cohesive team that display a clear understanding of their role and their respective responsibilities to both the international aviation industry and to their students.

Self-assessment at NAC is ongoing, authentic, transparent, and it is leading to worthwhile improvements.

Findings¹

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**.

NAC students have achieved excellent course completion rates and examination results. The course completion rate has consistently been above 95 per cent since 2013, for both domestic and international students.

NAC have benchmarked this course completion rate against other similar providers. Although NAC score better than other providers in the sector, they still aspire to maintain and continuously improve student achievement. Staff at NAC demonstrated a good understanding of the factors that lead to student achievement. They formally and informally analyse and discuss ideas for improving achievement.

NAC, and many other aviation training providers, see the number or percentage of “first attempt passes²” as an important measure of the success of their training. Aviation training providers benchmark their results against national averages of first time pass rates of all NZ aviation providers.³ Table 1 below shows that the ‘first attempt’ pass rate in 2015 in all categories have been well above sector average.

Table 1. 2015 flight test first-time pass rate %

	CPL	C-CAT ⁴	IFR
NAC	77%	92%	100%
New Zealand average	51%	68%	74%

First-time theory pass rates for domestic students have averaged 94 per cent since 2012. First-time theory pass rates for international students have averaged between 80 per cent and 85 per cent in the same period. The lower pass rate was explained by the difficulties that international students often have with some of the

¹ The findings in this report are derived using a standard process and are based on a targeted sample of the organisation’s activities.

² This measure refers to the number or percentage of students who pass external theory or flight test examinations on the first attempt.

³ ASL have recently made information on the national average available to all aviation training providers on a quarterly basis.

⁴ C-CAT or C Category rating is the first level instructors rating. From there instructors may advance to become B-CAT or A-CAT instructors.

technical language in aviation and ASL tests, as speakers of English as a second language.

NAC have recently raised the required IELTS level for entry to a 6.0 average. International students who have entered NAC since the change have out-scored domestic students in PPL and CPL theory tests.

During the training, NAC instructors supervise students on a daily basis. When each course of study is finished, every student completes a feedback survey to assess the performance of the organisation and provide feedback on the learning methods, instruction delivery and learning environment. The results of this feedback are collated, analysed and used effectively to inform improvements to course delivery.

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**.

NAC has a strong focus on providing value for their stakeholders. Evidence from feedback indicates that NAC are achieving this.

The immediate outcomes of this training (in addition to the NZ Diploma in Aviation Levels 5 and 6) are licences and ratings awarded by the CAA. All CPL and Diploma students are undertaking their training to prepare for a career in commercial aviation.

NAC management know the immediate employment or further study destination of all graduates and communicate with them regularly through a variety of media, both formal and informal. The information that NAC gains from this engagement is gathered and discussed. When applicable, the information leads to improvements in practice. The exit interview process is comprehensive and allows NAC to collect student feedback on the value of the training and their immediate career destinations on graduation.

The partnership arrangements that NAC have with overseas organisation like Air Nuigini have enabled them to have ongoing engagement with overseas employers. The representative from Air Nuigini the evaluators spoke with during the EER emphasised that the pilots trained by NAC were well prepared for employment on their return to their home country.

Eighty-six per cent of NAC graduates of the NZ Diploma of Aviation have gained employment in the aviation industry since 2012.

This excellent level of graduate employment is due to the focus that NAC has put on preparing graduates for the aviation workforce. NAC consider that the merit of

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the programme lies not only in the long-term professional outcomes for students, but also in the attributes (such as professionalism, confidence and positive attitudes) students acquire on the courses. NAC now need to formalise these characteristics into a graduate profile and determine how they will know whether or not graduates have actually acquired these attributes.

The AirNZ partnership programme is significant evidence of the quality of NAC's training, and is a substantial drawcard for intending students.

Through their ongoing engagement with aviation-related organisations (such as the Motueka Airport users group and Aviation New Zealand), NAC contributes to maintaining high standards in aviation training and the ongoing learning of professional pilots in New Zealand. For example, in 2014 the CFI was awarded the New Zealand Flight Instructor of the Year award.

NAC adds value in its community by, for instance, hosting school visits, participating in STAR and Gateway programmes for schools, and assisting local organisations with community events.

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**.

The training provided by NAC is relevant and technically sound. The evaluators saw evidence of this in records kept by the college and telephone conversations with external stakeholders confirmed it.

For example, there were no adverse or negative findings in the most recent CAA part 141 audit of NAC. The organisation is also on the longest audit cycle, which indicates CAA's confidence that NAC has sound internal systems to maintain quality and safety in its training operations. The selection of NAC as a PFTO of Air New Zealand Aviation Institute is also evidence that AirNZ considers that NAC can train well-prepared pilots.

NAC courses are structured to offer three different diplomas to domestic students and various CAA licences for international students. The overall delivery of training at NAC is designed so students complete all theory components of both the PPL and CPL before commencing their practical flying. This structure is different to the integrated approach that most aviation training providers take, but it works well at NAC.

NAC report that they have adopted and continued this structure to ensure that students can complete the theory components before making the substantial financial commitment associated with practical flying.

Students and instructors both reported that there are very positive relationships between them. This ensures that students' learning needs are well matched.

NAC's involvement with outside organisations such as the FTO partnership group, Aviation Services Ltd, CAA and Aviation Industry Association informs NAC practice and helps maintain a high standard of training. These outside organisations provide valuable feedback from the aviation industry. NAC is in regular contact with overseas stakeholders such as Air Niugini and Papua New Guinean government agencies. These stakeholders also provide useful feedback of their needs, feedback which is then used to fine tune provision for those students.

Training at NAC is enhanced by the location at Motueka:

- Prevailing weather means conditions are good for flying on most days throughout the year.
- Low aircraft traffic in Motueka airspace provides short waiting times and enhanced flight safety.
- Controlled airspace at Nelson is within ten minutes.
- There is a low flying area immediately adjacent to the airfield.
- Mountain flying is available within ten minutes flight time.

The close proximity of these environments means that students are not wasting valuable and expensive flying time ferrying to training areas.

Student evaluations are conducted to a regular schedule and gather students' feedback on their experiences of different aspects of their programmes. This includes programme content and delivery, facilities and staff effectiveness.

The information is then used to bring about useful improvements to teaching and programme design and ensure that student needs are being met.

1.4 How effective is the teaching?

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 **Good**.

The EER team found consistent evidence of excellent teaching taking place throughout the organisation. Instructors are enthusiastic and passionate about their teaching. They are also well supported by management.

Every staff member at NAC has a role in ensuring that all students achieve. There was evidence of the whole organisation purposely engaging in meaningful discussion about teaching practice. The instructors have a very collegial approach and all share the same office space, so they communicate and share information informally every day. NAC also have a compulsory staff meeting every week where

the main topic is the progress and achievement of students. Actions from these meetings are minuted.

The instructors have extensive industry and professional experience, and an obvious natural passion and ability to engage students. However, their teaching practice would be enhanced by more external contact with the adult teaching profession. The evaluation team believes that stronger policy and practice in this area (for instance, sending instructors to occasional courses on adult teaching⁵, or contracting an external expert to assist with reflective practice) would enhance the instructors' understanding of what works and demonstrates excellent practice.

Since all assessment is conducted externally, NAC is not required to moderate assessments. NAC staff spend substantial time teaching students exam technique aligned to the theory examination format. The theory examinations can be very difficult, especially for students with English as a second language.

The strong rapport between students and staff was confirmed from discussions and student survey results. Students have access to staff outside of formal classes and can make suggestions about improvements. Students noted that the staff were responsive to any concerns or issues raised.

There is a well-established process for briefing before, and a debriefing after, practical flights. Students and staff interviewed during this evaluation commented on the fact that instructors build trusting relationships with students. This allows the both instructor and student to give and receive frank feedback, confirming the value of this process and its contribution to the overall learning environment.

The ground training manager and CFI regularly conduct interviews with students to review progress and gain feedback on their learning and experience. These interviews are also a way to discuss career aspirations, set goals with students and offer advice on further training and study.

NAC has appointed highly qualified flight instructors, including ratings for multi-engine flying, night flying, instrument flying, and aerobatics. The current ratio of students to instructors is low, which allows for a high level of one-to-one attention and ready access to aircraft to build up flying hours.

The small classes and awareness of different learning styles enable instructors to cater to international student needs.

The permanent staff are well qualified A-CAT, B-CAT and C-CAT instructors. Instructors have extensive aviation and professional experience, as well as an obvious natural passion and ability to engage students. A strong feature of the instructors at NAC is the long period that several of them have been instructors. These instructors have not used the job as a means to build hours before seeking

⁵ For instance courses and workshops offered by Ako Aotearoa or adult teaching courses at Nelson Marlborough Institute of Technology.

employment in the airline industry, but have chosen to be “career instructors”. This has been strongly encouraged by NAC management and has led to a core of highly experienced instructional staff who have continued to hone their skills and build the instructional capability of the organisation.

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**.

NAC has robust and client-friendly systems for the pastoral care of its students. The organisation is providing a safe and supportive learning environment for its students and is in close contact with students outside of the normal hours of tuition.

Pre-enrolment information is comprehensive and designed to ensure that students make informed decisions before committing to a significant personal and financial investment. The biggest single barrier for students to entry and success in the NZ Diploma in Aviation is the financial resources needed. To address this, NAC provide good guidance and support to students if required to help them manage the financial aspect of training, including providing a scholarship. Students interviewed valued the fact that their first involvement with NAC was an in-depth discussion with the CEO or CFI about their aspirations and their experience to date. This allowed an individual programme to be tailored to their needs.

International students receive a comprehensive orientation programme in their first week of study. Also there is a designated support staff member for 24-hour phone contact should the students require help when away from the site. Many international students have required, and been provided with, substantial practical support in the early part of their study.

For instance, in a recent group of students from overseas, none of the students had ever driven a car or ever ridden a bicycle! So before teaching them to fly an aeroplane, the NAC staff taught them to drive a car – starting with lessons on the runway each morning. This helped the students immensely in terms of building confidence and developing the hand/eye co-ordination necessary to become pilots.

Accommodation for international students is managed in-house by the international student co-ordinator. NAC have good accommodation for up to 14 students on-site and also rent two houses adjacent to the airfield with supervised accommodation for a further six students. All international students are accommodated on-site for their first semester. This ensures that they can be closely supervised and supported as necessary. Students living both on-site and off-site have access to the wholesome low-cost meals available at the NAC cafeteria.

English is the international language of aviation and NAC entry requirements have IELTS requirements for various levels of training. Nevertheless, some students

have still required additional support with English, which NAC has contracted a specialist to provide. NAC has recently raised the level of IELTS required for entry into their courses. This has significantly contributed to the lift in theory examination results for international students previously referred to in this report.

Students are provided with a comprehensive student handbook with information on:

- courses
- examinations
- assessments
- rules, regulations and policies
- facilities
- services.

It also includes information on grievance and complaint forms and a useful study contract. NAC has detailed and robust procedures for resolving complaints. Feedback from students was that any complaint or feedback was addressed appropriately and in reasonable time.

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**.

NAC is a privately owned and operated aviation training provider with a strategic plan that has set clear goals and objectives. The organisation has developed and embedded effective systems for monitoring student achievement and supporting staff to improve educational performance. Quality, in relation to both aircraft operations and pilot training, is well embedded in the organisation.

NAC's management recognise that the key to success of their business lies in the success of their students and the value that they gain from their training. NAC actively supports strategies to increase student achievement and to support students to meet their employment goals. The owners' leadership and management style are a strong influence on organisational culture. It fosters professionalism, safety and customer service. Both staff and students commented that they enjoyed the relaxed yet highly professional culture in the organisation.

NAC has employed very highly qualified and experienced staff, which it manages effectively and actively develops. The value that NAC management put on the experience and know-how of their instructional team is clearly apparent and makes a positive difference to educational quality.

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 monitor resourcing to ensure that there are always sufficient resources (mainly aircraft and instructors) to meet the needs of their students.

Monitoring of performance within NAC is regular, transparent, and robust. The organisation encourages reflection on its role and how to continue to make ongoing and continuous improvements to how it meets the needs of students and other stakeholders. Self-assessment is being well led by management and is comprehensively understood and adopted throughout the college. Management and staff enthusiastically encourage opportunities for reflection on their roles and how to better meet stakeholder needs. This has led to an authentic and highly reflective environment and culture strongly embedded throughout the organisation.

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: Flight training

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).

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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