

Flying schools

in Australia and New Zealand

Flight training is a growth market worldwide and flying schools in Australia and New Zealand are keen to establish themselves as quality providers in this field.

Many institutions offering flying courses in Australia and New Zealand have noticed increasing international enrolments from a variety of student markets in recent years. 'We have seen growth in interest [in our flying courses] from India, the United Arab Emirates and the South Pacific,' says Darrin Ward, Managing Director of Basair Australia in Queensland. 'This has been due to the awareness of Australia as an ideal aviation training country, [as well as the] growth in world aviation markets -despite September 11.'

Flying schools worldwide are benefiting from global growth in the aviation market due to increased tourism, and those in Australia and New Zealand are keen to point out their natural advantages in this field. Plenty of wide open spaces and a mild climate ensure that flying students have the best conditions in which to pursue their training. 'The weather and flying conditions allow a student to progress in a methodical and timely fashion,' says Captain Jan Becker, Managing Director of Becker Helicopters in Queensland. 'There are no delays in air traffic control [or] hovering and flying restrictions due to noise. In many schools, it takes 20 to 40 minutes to get to the training area, which effectively uses up valuable money.'

David Chapman from Aerospace Aviation in New South Wales agrees that Australia's natural assets can mean a more cost-effective and successful training experience. 'Clear skies mean more frequent flying [which means] better utilisation of time for both student and operator,' he says. And Geraldine McCarthy at Widebay Tafe in Queensland points out the scenic attractions of Australia. 'We have ample free air space and beautiful terrain to conduct both short and longer flights.'

Gaining a private pilot's licence requires a student to fly for a minimum of 24 hours, while commercial pilots' licences



PHOTOGRAPH: BECKER HELICOPTERS

require a further 150 hours of training and 70 hours of solo flying, making this an expensive vocation for students anywhere in the world. The current favourable exchange rate of the New Zealand and Australian dollars, therefore, can have a significant effect on the total cost for students. Irene Robb, from Waikato Institute of Technology in New Zealand, believes students are attracted to flying schools in Australia and New Zealand because 'usually the cost is less and they have very practical training -including the opportunity to increase their flying hours at a reasonable cost'.

Most international students, whether studying for a private or commercial pilot's licence, intend to use their qualification in their home country, so it is essential that any training they do is recognised internationally. 'We have all our courses government-accredited and we meet the training requirements necessary for [our international students'] countries,' says Gary Young, from Flight Training Australia in Queensland. 'This enables them to return and get employment with their own airline company.'

Catalina Upegui Mejía from Latino Australia Education in Colombia says that flight training in Australia is popular with her students because any previous training they have already completed in Colombia is recognised, which means that students who wish to continue in more specialised areas can do so. She adds, '[Australia] has a splendid reputation not only in aviation [but] in all fields of study, because it has excellent teachers specialised in different and important areas.'

Marketing overseas

'Internet, Internet, Internet,' says David Chapman, from Aerospace Aviation in New South Wales, when asked which international marketing methods he uses to promote his flying courses. As flight training is such a niche market, many flying schools in Australia rely heavily on their website to provide as much accurate information as possible to potential students. They also appear reluctant to fully rely on the services of overseas consultants.

'Most of our marketing is done by using our website,' says Geraldine McCarthy from WideBay Tafe in Queensland. 'We use a range of education consultants across the world but interested clients are best advised to visit our website and contact us directly.'

'We do not use agents,' adds Captain Jan Becker, Managing Director of Becker Helicopters in Queensland. 'Helicopter flying is very unique and has a very discerning market who do not want the sales pitch but the real hard facts.'

However, Catalina Upegui Mejía, from Latino Australia Education in Colombia, believes that education consultants can be beneficial to flying schools. 'We receive a lot of students interested in flight training. It's been easy [working with Flight Training Australia] because when information is needed they answer very fast and this [enables us to give] our best attention to the clients,' she says.

Selection of institutions providing flying courses in Australia and New Zealand

| | Location | Use agents? | No. of students | % int. students |
|---------------------------------|---------------------|-------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Aerospace Aviation | Bankstown, NSW | ✓ | 154 | 29 |
| Air Centre Albury | Albury, NSW | | 15 | 0 |
| Basair Australia | Bankstown, NSW | ✓ | 60 | 15 |
| Becker Helicopters | Sunshine Coast, QLD | | 30 | 95 |
| Edith Cowan University | Perth, WA | ✓ | 140 | 10 |
| Flight Training Australia | Archerfield, QLD | ✓ | 75 | 35 |
| The Armidale School | Armidale, NSW | ✓ | 10 | 10 |
| Waikato Institute of Technology | Hamilton, NZ | ✓ | 20 | 10 |
| WideBay Tafe | Brisbane, QLD | ✓ | 12 | 50 |