



Media Release
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New qualification for fledgling Aviation industry

The Aviation Tourism and Travel Training Organisation has submitted a new qualification to help a fledgling new Aviation sector take flight safely.

The latest generation of uninhabited aerial vehicles (UAVs) are opening up a whole new sector of aviation in New Zealand. ATTTO is now working with operators to ensure they can operate safely in New Zealand's airspace.

ATTTO has submitted a draft qualification to the NZQA highlighting the training requirements needed to meet operational needs and current aviation authority requirements.

The qualification was developed in conjunction with fixed wing UAV operator Hawkeye UAV Ltd in Palmerston North and Massey University School of Flight. It is aimed to set a standard for training for the UAV industry, which analysts predict could be worth \$89bn globally in the next few years.

The qualification includes all the basic principles of aviation, covering issues such as air law, meteorology, principles of flight, navigation and flight planning as well as items more specific to UAVs such as ground station setup.

David Pemberton from Hawkeye said: "The aim behind developing the qualification is to protect what is a young industry. Although UAVs are prevalent in the military, the industry is in its infancy in the commercial sector.

"We looked at what we thought the CAA would want out of a UAV operator, and we put the syllabus together from that point of view. There is currently no framework, we had to go with our best analysis of what the job needed or what skill sets are needed."

"There are semi-harmless enthusiasts and hobbyists out there, but when you get into machinery that can really do damage to a person, equipment or property, then it has to have some regulation or over-sighting law."

"It's through engagement with CAA that we've been allowed to operate in New Zealand, so it's definitely the right approach."

Stephen Davies Howard is Director of Sycamore, a CAA licenced rotary winged UAV operator which specialises in aerial filming for movies, television and advertising. He sees great growth potential in the sector, but says that it needs standards and appropriate legislation to ensure continued safety.

Stephen said: "Anyone can go on the internet, buy a rotorcopter UAV and fly one competently with some practice. What you can't do so easily is operate it safely and legally within regulated airspace around other air traffic for commercial purposes.

“As a hobbyist, buying and flying a rotorcopter “UAV” at the model aircraft site or sports field outside of controlled airspace is one thing, but that is not what we are talking about regulating. Flying safely commercially without endangering the public or other air operators is a completely different game.

“Our concern is people thinking they can just go out willy-nilly, fly them in the street and take pictures. It is incredibly hard to do that safely. When we were looking for a pilot to employ what we wanted was a really steady pair of hands with an appropriate level of aviation knowledge of air law and airspace coordination that we could trust to lift our \$30,000 machine, put it somewhere and get it back safely. That combination proved very hard to find. A qualification that pulls those skills sets together would have helped greatly.”

Piloting a UAV requires a practical skill set quite different to that of a pilot. Flying a model aircraft is better preparation than flying a plane.

UAVs currently operate under the same CAA rules that cover kites, balloons, fireworks and gliders. The industry is currently working with the CAA to develop a more suitable set of rules to better reflect the capabilities and risks of a UAV.

Stephen said: “The legislation is inappropriate at present, which means Sycamore apply it in the most restrictive sense, which means we are not using the capability to its full potential and that affects its commercial viability. So we’re working with CAA to develop specific rules for UAVs because they are really needed.

“We’re all about the film industry, TV and advertising. We started off with a big picture, in that we were going to do powerline and wind turbine inspections and that sort of thing, but there needs to be more specific guidance before it becomes a commercially viable proposition even though the technology is capable of doing so.”

For more information about the Aviation qualifications offered by ATTTO, visit www.attto.org.nz

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About ATTTO:

- ATTTO is the Industry Training Organisation for New Zealand’s aviation, tourism, travel and museums industries. Its role is to provide industry leadership on skill and training needs, set skills standards, and design and deliver world-class qualifications that meet industry needs.
- ATTTO industry qualifications are designed to be completed on-the-job by people employed in our industries. Many can also be completed through training providers.
- All ATTTO qualifications are nationally recognised and registered by the New Zealand Qualifications Authority on the New Zealand Qualifications Framework.
- At 31 October 2011, there were more than 2,800 New Zealanders from 230 workplaces training towards national qualifications with ATTTO.