

Making the Most of Instructing

Getting the most out of instructing – whether it’s adding value to a lesson or maximising your own personal enjoyment – was a strong message from this year’s Flight Instructor Seminar.

The CAA’s biennial seminars are open to any type of instructor, and were held in Ashburton, Hamilton, and Wellington.

CAA Aviation Examiner, Marc Brogan, says the participants were varied.

“There were attendees from the Part 61 and Part 141 training environments, both helicopter and fixed wing. We also had microlight, and balloon instructors – we even had a CEO.”

Marc gave an update on the dual flight training review and made a presentation on ‘Your role as a flight instructor’.

It was during this presentation that Marc got participants thinking about instruction as a profession in its own right.

“The thing with instructing is sometimes people treat it as a pathway on to other things like airlines, which is fine. But I wanted to emphasise that it has merits in its own right. It should be enjoyed while you’re there, rather than thinking about the next step. And it’s a good environment to learn how to be a better pilot.

“That actually came out of a conversation I had with Richie McCaw, when he said that sometimes he was so goal-oriented in his rugby career that he forgot to enjoy himself on the way.”

The former All Black captain spoke at the seminars, and was an attendee on one.

Richie reinforced the message that instruction should be enjoyed.

He also talked about leadership and performance.

“The example he used,” says Marc, “was ‘what is an acceptable level of high performance?’ Would you go to a surgeon if he or she was having a six out of 10 day? Probably not, so why should a six out of 10 instructor be suitable?”

Shannon Mickleburgh, a flight instructor from Massey University, says one session that really stuck with him was ‘how to make the most of a lesson’, taken by CAA Principal Aviation Examiner, David Harrison.

Two of his key messages were that people don’t learn as much if they’re not enjoying themselves, and that instructors should add value to lessons to make them more meaningful.

“That was really interesting from a flight instructor’s perspective, to make more use of the hour-long flight you have with a student,” says Shannon.

“I actually went home and revisited some of my lesson plans and tried to incorporate that advice. At Massey, we already do scenario-based training, so we’re thinking about the whole package. We talk about things like what we’re going to do, and how we’re going to get out there. David had some great ideas for adding little scenarios within the entire flight itself.”

One of the other things David talked about was that it’s not ‘cheating’ to employ good airmanship in terms of where you fly, etc, while you’re training, or during a flight test.

“It’s okay, for example, to do manoeuvres close to a field, to always have a field in sight – it’s not cheating to do that. Or using what’s available to you in terms of avionics and things,” says Shannon.

Squadron Leader Brett Clayton, who’s in charge of the Central Flying School at the Royal New Zealand Air Force, says the seminar was great for networking.

“At the end of the day we all share the common goal of staying safe in aviation and we’re often subjected to the same considerations and pressures. It was a neat reminder that ‘hey, we’re not actually alone’.”

You can see Flight Instructor seminar presentations at www.caa.govt.nz, “Quick Links > Seminars and Courses”. ■

