

# Managing National Assessment Report

## James Cook High School

June 2021

## What this report is about

This report summarises NZQA's review of how effectively James Cook High School:

- has addressed issues identified through NZQA's Managing National Assessment review and through the school's own internal review
- manages assessment practice for national qualifications
- manages internal and external moderation
- makes use of and manages assessment-related data
- maintains the currency of assessment policy and procedures, and communicates them to staff, students and families.

The summary section evaluates the school's overall effectiveness and provides a broad overview of the review's key findings for all readers. The remaining sections provide detail of these findings for school managers.

## Why we review how schools are managing national assessment

The purpose of a Managing National Assessment review is:

- to confirm, in combination with the most recent Education Review Office report, that schools are meeting the requirements of the *Consent to Assess Against Standards on the Directory of Assessment Standards Rules 2011* (CAAS) and its *Guidelines* (CAAS Guidelines) in order to maintain their consent to assess; and
- to help schools achieve valid, fair, accurate and consistent internal assessment according to the requirements of the *Assessment (including Examination) Rules for Schools with Consent to Assess 2021* (Assessment Rules).

## What are possible outcomes

Outcomes may include NZQA:

- requiring action from the school where an issue is identified that significantly impacts on the school meeting the requirements of their *Consent to Assess*
- agreeing action with the school where an issue has been identified that could become significant if not addressed
- making suggestions for the school to consider to enhance good assessment practice.

## What this review includes

The review has three components:

- The annual external moderation of the school's internal assessment.
- A check on specific aspects of assessment systems on an annual basis.
- A check on the school's assessment systems at least once every four years.

## How we conducted this review

The review includes examination of documentation from a range of sources and interviewing key stakeholders.

Prior to the visit the school provided the following documents:

- information on their actions and self-review since the last Managing National Assessment report
- *James Cook High School Assessment Rules and Procedures (Staff edition 2021)* (Staff Handbook)
- *James Cook High School NCEA Student and Whanau Information Updated February 2021* (Student Handbook)
- a sample of course outlines for Years 11, 12 and 13
- samples of quick reference guides on assessment practices and processes, meeting minutes on moderation, 2020 variance analysis, moderation audit findings for a faculty.

Two School Relationship Manager met with:

- the Principal's Nominee
- Deputy Principal – Curriculum/Assessment
- Head(s) of Faculty/Department for:
  - English
  - Physical Education
  - Social Sciences
  - Technology
- Teacher(s) in Charge of:
  - Dance
  - Tongan Language
- six students.

There were report-back sessions with the Principal, Deputy Principal and Principal's Nominee at the end and after the review visit to highlight good practice and areas for improvement, with suggested strategies, next steps and to agree on any action required.

# SUMMARY

## James Cook High School

2 June 2021

### Consent to assess confirmed

This review found that the school is meeting the requirements of the *Consent to Assess Against Standards on the Directory of Assessment Standards Rules 2011*. No significant issues with the school's management of national assessment were found. The school's own review mechanisms allow them to identify and respond to most issues. Therefore, it is anticipated that the next Managing National Assessment review will be conducted within three years.

At the request of NZQA, and with the school's agreement, this review was rescheduled from 2020 due to COVID-19 pandemic.

### What the school is doing well

James Cook High School has worked hard since the last review three years ago to improve both student assessment opportunities and achievement. Review of curriculum and achievement is leading to changes in curriculum, assessment programmes and culturally responsive pedagogy. The school is now well placed to identify student needs including those at risk of not completing qualifications, and to ensure resources are provided to address these. Their success is evident across a range of indicators including improved rates of student achievement, to meeting the qualifications needs of students, systems to track student's academic progress, use of data to evaluate and inform course and programme design.

Students are at the heart of school practice. The development of the James Cook High School Code identifies and unpacks the school's values, which centre around the principles of MANA: manaaki (care), atawhai (contribute), nanaiore (endeavour) and ako (learn). MANA underpins the changes the school has made.

Assessment and quality assurance processes promote credible assessment. School practices provide evidence that grades reported to NZQA are credible. Teachers are taking increasing accountability for their practices, including ensuring assessment credibility. They value the moderation systems in place for how they support their professional understanding.

The Principal's Nominees and senior leaders continue to support achievement and credible assessment practices. Their actions and communications are timely and targeted, to build teacher understandings and capacity in assessment, achievement, and meeting student needs. Teachers and students recognise the achievement focused shift that has occurred in the school.

The school's capacity for review has developed to the extent that it is able to lead and action sustained strategic and management changes that builds best practice. Critical discussion is encouraged, and external review findings valued for the information it provides on the school and next steps.

Data processes are carried out accurately and reliably so that entry and result data accurately reflect assessment opportunities and outcomes. The tracking of student

progress towards qualifications can be relied on, as evident in the school's successful response in 2020 to the impact of the COVID pandemic on its students.

There are no agreed action items. Some next steps for the school to consider are detailed in the body of the report.

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17 August 2021

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# FINDINGS OF THIS REVIEW

## How effectively has the school responded to external and internal review?

### External review

*Evidence for external review actions having been appropriately and effectively addressed. (CAAS Guidelines 2.6iv, 3iv-3v)*

**Action Items from 21 and 21 August 2018 Managing National Assessment Report** The three agreed actions from this review were for the school to:

- ensure all entries have a result reported
- develop processes for review of achievement data that is timely and assures accountability
- consider the purpose of assessment when developing their vision for meeting student qualifications needs.

The school has made good progress on all three items as detailed further on in this report.

### Response to external moderation outcomes

The school's process for responding to external moderation feedback assures assessment quality. The Principal's Nominee checks all external moderation reports, then asks relevant Heads of Learning Areas to report back on how they have responded to the moderators' feedback. The Learning Area Head must provide evidence that any assessment quality issues have been resolved. This is checked during the Principal's Nominees internal audit, if not before.

Overall feedback from external moderators shows that the quality of the school's assessment is good, providing evidence for the efficacy of the processes for follow up on external moderation and internal moderation.

### Internal review

*Evidence for the school using its self-review and evaluation processes to identify areas for on-going improvement in assessment practice and procedures, which are then actioned. (CAAS Guidelines 3iv)*

The significant changes made by the school over the last four years have seen their internal review focus mature and shift from developing process to improving student achievement. Their confidence and ability to critically examine and sustain a strategic approach to change is much stronger. Self-review processes provide evidence that assessment practices are credible schoolwide, so the school can now focus on its vision to build confident, qualified, and culturally competent students.

**Focus firmly on student achievement** To further promote student achievement, the school is seeking to determine why they do things, rather than just what or how. Central to this has been the development of the James Cook High School code which identifies and unpacks the school's values, centred around the principles of MANA: manaaki (care), atawhai (contribute), nanaiore (endeavour) and ako (learn). MANA informs strategic direction and underpins decision making and change.

While the school remains a 'hothouse of intervention' their increased capacity and confidence means they are now firmly in the driving seat of change. Senior leaders

observed that an important cultural shift has occurred to support their achievement focus. Pastoral issues have reduced significantly and so Deans have the time and space to focus on student learning and engagement. Staff are increasingly willing to engage in change, take ownership and be accountable. The school identified their next steps as:

- progressing school wide NCEA monitoring and tracking / use of data by investigating systems for building the capacity and capability of Heads of Faculty
- developing the academic mentoring capability of teachers, with a pilot programme this year for 32 year 11 students and their deans, which will expand to include the lead tutor teachers at Level 1, followed by level 2.
- making Pasifika/Te Reo Maori languages core in the Junior school to support this curriculum area for Years 11 to 13
- adding Te Reo as a stand-alone subject for mainstream students as they move into Level 1 from Year 10, removing the current curriculum gap where only Puutake students can study Te Reo at Level 1.

**COVID Response example** The school's response to the impact of the COVID pandemic on students in 2020 illustrates the impact of this cultural shift. They found many students did not have the ability to consistently access remote learning, so the school reprioritised student assessment programmes in response. The strategic decision was made to focus on the qualifications achievement of Years 12 and 13, given that these students could be school leavers. They reworked their targets for year 11 students to achieving the NCEA Level 1 literacy and numeracy requirements only. A cornerstone of this was gaining the school's community and Board understanding and support for this approach.

With the school's improved tracking and mentoring programmes, and increased teacher confidence in tailoring assessment to student need, the school confidently met their 2020 targets. Achievement for NCEA Level 2 and 3, and University Entrance was significantly better than for the previous 4 years. Rates of achievement of NCEA Level 1 and Literacy and Numeracy matched the previous two years.

**Effectiveness reviews inform credible assessment** Senior Leaders are embedding self-review processes that confirm assessment practices and policies are fit for purpose. Key to these processes are the annual audits of:

- curriculum, where the Deputy Principal analyses what standards were being offered and why others are not, examines past achievement rates, and negotiates future course and assessment directions
- learning areas by the Principal's Nominee who checks on quality assurance practices to identify any areas of good practice, inconsistency, misunderstanding, or need for change.

The school noted that both audits have resulted not only in improvements to courses, and assessment practices, but to the quality of discussions teachers are having about assessment and achievement.

### **No action required**

No issues with the school's response to NZQA external reviews and/or its self-review of assessment systems and practice were identified during this review.

## **How effectively does the school's assessment practice meet the needs of its students?**

*Evidence for assessment practice meeting student needs. (CAAS Guidelines 2.5v-vii, 2.6i & ii and Assessment (including Examination) Rules for Schools with Consent to Assess 2021 5.1 – 5.7)*

### **James Cook High School has effective processes and procedures for meeting the assessment needs of their students by:**

- encouraging teachers to use a variety of evidence gathering methods to help students present their best evidence
- developing a range of authentic learning contexts and more personalised programmes to better engage students and enhance achievement
- assessing when students are assessment ready
- encouraging teacher reflection after each unit of work to improve programmes and outcomes
- offering programmes, academies and units that provide a range of specialist academic and vocational pathways for students, including the use of tertiary external providers to enrich opportunities
- regular tracking and monitoring of progress toward achievement of the Level 1 Literacy and Numeracy requirements; providing opportunities for catch up tutorials to those students who need additional support
- seeking feedback from students who had special assessment conditions entitlements in external examinations in 2020 to inform improvements for 2021
- providing Year 13 students with an additional timetabled class daily to help them manage their workload, have time to complete assessments and receive support from a Deputy Principal in their progress towards University Entrance.

### **James Cook High School has effective processes and procedures for:**

- managing missed and late assessment
- providing appropriate further assessment and resubmission opportunities, with the Principal's Nominee checking on these as part of his annual audit of faculties
- developing new courses and extending the scope of their consent to assess so that students have access to other vocational pathways
- checking that subject courses provide students with an appropriate number of credits to achieve NCEA by the Deputy Principal monitoring course outlines and mark books
- ensuring evidence for derived grades is valid and reliable
- meeting the requirements of the *Privacy Act 1993*.

**Working towards equity – providing a culturally responsive environment to meet student assessment need** The school is focussed on changing the learning and achievement environment so that students feel able to bring their culture through the gate, as part of its plan to develop confident, qualified and culturally competent learners. They are in the process of developing plans and interventions as a key initiative in building student academic focus and achievement by enhancing their connection to the school.



The school's focus on using data means they are very aware of some of the student achievement trends for Maori and Pasifika in University Entrance and STEM subjects and the benefit in improving these. They noted several contributing factors including:

- the number of students enrolled in "alternative courses" such as the Trades Academy where assessment uses non-university approved standards
- Maori and Pasifika students at Level 3 achieving many credits from language and performance standards and placing less emphasis on other subjects
- students having free choice of options resulting in a big uptake of non-STEM subjects.

The school has made some changes in response. They have appointed a Deputy Principal responsible for monitoring and following up on University Entrance to ensure that students have sufficient opportunity to meet the requirements for this pathway. Review of curriculum areas and programmes with an equity lens is underway as are plans to provide more mentoring to students and whanau on subject selection.

**Equity in STEM a focus** The school is particularly focused on student achievement in STEM subjects. While equity for their Pasifika students has improved in STEM subjects, it has not for Maori. Again, the school has implemented several strategies to address this including strengthening the Technology learning area by providing additional teachers and resourcing. Other initiatives include:

- raising student and whanau expectations for academic achievement and prioritising STEM subjects
- actively encouraging the use of achievement standards in Technology courses
- having all students study Technology in the junior school, to encourage more to continue with this curriculum area for NCEA
- using the Careers information day to encourage students to look at STEM subjects in relation to the careers they want to pursue.

### **No action required**

No issues with the school's management of assessment for national qualifications were identified during this review.

## **How effectively does the school's internal and external moderation assure assessment quality?**

*Evidence for internal and external moderation ensuring assessment quality. (CAAS Guidelines 2.6iii & vi, and Assessment (including Examination) Rules for Schools with Consent to Assess 2021 6.4b)*

### **James Cook High School has effective processes and procedures for managing internal moderation by:**

- ensuring all assessment materials are critiqued prior to use
- selecting samples of student work for grade verification at grade boundaries, and strategically, based on the experience of the assessor
- using subject specialists to verify grades awarded on a purposefully selected sample of student work, including verifiers outside the school where specialists are not available internally
- documenting evidence that internal moderation has occurred for all standards assessed and storing student work samples and exemplars to inform teachers in subsequent years about the standard
- having Faculty Heads attest annually that internal moderation has occurred for all standards assessed
- mentoring new subject Heads to ensure they understand and can action this quality assurance process
- monitoring the quality of the process through the annual audit of Faculties carried out by the Principals' Nominee.

### **James Cook High School has effective processes and procedures for managing external moderation by:**

- the Principal's Nominee selecting samples of student work to NZQA requirements after internal moderation is completed
- submitting materials for external moderation in a timely fashion
- expecting all submissions to be digital in 2022
- ensuring samples of student work are provided by requiring samples of student work to be digitally stored for every standard assessed
- following the same processes for standards owned by Transitional Industry Training Organisations.

### **No action required**

No issues with the school's internal and external moderation were identified during this review.

## **How effectively does the school manage and make use of assessment-related data?**

*Evidence for data management and use supporting student achievement outcomes. (CAAS Guidelines 2.6v, 2.7i-iii)*

### **James Cook High School effectively uses assessment-related data to support achievement outcomes for students by:**

- every teacher carrying out their own annual analysis of achievement which then contributes to the collective understanding of their learning area, informs change and is reported to the Board of Trustees
- some learning areas analysing student achievement after each unit of work
- improving the recording and reporting of emergency grades to NZQA
- ensuring achievement data for newly enrolled students is recorded and reported correctly.

### **James Cook High School reports accurate achievement data by:**

- ensuring they have consent to assess for all standards assessed
- encouraging students to access their NZQA login so they can monitor their entries and results, and access external digital examinations
- monitoring assessment by outside providers, including the Principal's Nominee checking and filing all Memoranda of Understanding
- close monitoring of teacher mark books by the Deputy Principal – Curriculum/Assessment and Principal's Nominee
- submitting data files monthly to meet NZQAs timelines.

### **Processes ensure data accurately reflects assessment opportunities and outcomes**

The processes the school has put in place ensure that entry and result data now accurately reflect student assessment opportunities and outcomes. This allows the school to monitor student outcomes with confidence, knowing that the data they are using is providing reliable information on how student achievement is tracking.

Every entry has a grade reported. The strategies the school has used to achieve this situation are twofold:

- focusing on developing teacher understanding about the relationship between assessment opportunities and entry and result data
- developing checks that rely on more than one person and method so that potential gaps are closed.

Evidence of the efficacy of these processes includes:

- minimal entries with no result (43 out of 11,00 entries in 2020)
- in 2020 only 15 results were reported after the last datafile was submitted, compared with 375 in 2019
- the rate external standards not attempted and student absence being 30 percent less than other schools of the same decile.

**No action required**

No issues with the school's management and use of assessment-related data were identified during this review.

## How effectively does the school's communication inform staff, and students and their families about assessment?

*Evidence for school communication promoting understanding of assessment. (CAAS Guidelines 2.4i(f), 2.4v, 2.6vii, 2.7ii(b))*

### **James Cook High School has effective processes and procedures for:**

- ensuring students receive outlines for all courses they undertake
- communicating assessment policy and procedure, including the Principal's Nominee producing quick reference guides for teachers to develop or clarify their understanding of a process or practice when the need is identified
- communicating to students and whanau through formal reports and progress reports, Home School Partnership meetings, NCEA parent evenings and by encouraging whanau to access the parent portal
- supporting teachers new to the school by the Specialist Classroom and Curriculum Support teachers providing a more comprehensive induction programme
- reviewing course information, and student and teacher handbooks, to ensure that the information they contain is consistent, comprehensive, and reflects current school and national policy.

### **James Cook High School assists common understanding of assessment practice by:**

- checking whether teachers, students and parents are following processes through learning area meetings and annual audits
- using flowcharts to explain assessment practice and procedures
- building the capacity of tutor teachers so they can help students to know and understand what they need to achieve in order to gain a qualification
- making teachers aware of what is available through the NZQA Provider login and supporting their access to take advantage of the resources and information it provides
- using teacher and student feedback to inform change to documentation or communication, so they have agency and ownership.

**Student handbook supports school's achievement focus** The student handbook has been rewritten as part of the school's focus on ensuring that students are well supported to achieve. The new edition is more user friendly, being written in simpler language that students can understand and answering the questions they ask about assessment and qualifications. The next step for the school to consider is to carry out a similar rationalisation of policy and processes for the information provided to teachers.

**Strong leadership supports school assessment change** The leadership of the Deputy Principal – Curriculum/ Assessment and Principal's Nominee has been a significant feature of the improved assessment and achievement culture at the school. They have modelled the change process by their actions showing students and teachers how to grow in understanding, knowledge, and ability. Their openness, approachability and impact were noted by the teachers and students interviewed.

**For consideration**

To extend good practice in ensuring that information about assessment to students, staff and families is current and accessible, the school is encouraged to consider:

- rationalise the policy and process information provided to teachers.