

Managing National Assessment Report

Waikato Diocesan School for Girls

July 2021

What this report is about

This report summarises NZQA's review of how effectively Waikato Diocesan School for Girls:

- 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
- *Waikato Diocesan School for Girls NCEA Assessment Policy – Staff Handbook 2021*
- *Waikato Diocesan School for Girls NCEA Assessment Policy – Student Handbook 2021*
- *Waikato Diocesan School for Girls NCEA Principal's Nominee Handbook*
- *Waikato Diocesan School for Girls NCEA Strategic Plan 2019-2022*
- a sample of Assessment Policies
- a sample of course outlines for Years 11, 12 and 13.

The School Relationship Manager met with:

- the Acting Principal's Nominee
- the Principal's Nominee, who is currently on study leave
- Heads of Department for:
 - Arts
 - Health and Physical Education
 - Humanities
 - Languages
 - Social Sciences
 - Technology
 - Te Reo, who is also Teacher in Charge of Kaupapa Māori in the Priority Learners' Department
- three students.

There was a report-back session with the Principal, Acting Principal's Nominee, Principal's Nominee (on study leave) and Deputy Principal at the end of the review visit to highlight good practice and areas for improvement, with suggested strategies, next steps and to agree on any action required.

SUMMARY

Waikato Diocesan School for Girls

1 July 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.

What the school is doing well

The school's focus of enabling each student to achieve her personal best is underpinned by its vision of supporting all students in a spiritual and culturally inclusive learning community. The school is justifiably proud of its levels of achievement in NCEA, Certificate/Course endorsement and University Entrance. A significant number of Scholarships are achieved each year and an increasing number of students achieve a range of Vocational Pathway awards.

Waikato Diocesan School for Girls uses the flexibility of the NCEA model and differentiated assessment programmes to meet the individual needs, interests and career aspirations of students to support the school's strategic goal of providing *"integrated learner centred programmes that meet the needs and aspiration of all girls"* (*Ako:Ā tātou ākongā*). Assessment decisions place the student at the centre of teachers' and the school's decision when changing assessment practice and programmes.

The school community, whānau and teachers set high expectations for student achievement. Effective school procedures track student progress to identify those at risk of not achieving a qualification, so appropriate support can be put in place. School processes also identify students needing literacy support or a modified assessment programme to support wellbeing.

Māori student achievement continues to be significantly above that of similar schools reflecting the support for Māori students and the value the school places on meeting Te Tiriti o Waitangi commitments. On-going professional learning enables teachers to incorporate culturally inclusive practices and context choices that reflect the interests and needs of students and support them to succeed as Māori.

Effective internal moderation practice and procedures are embedded, with Heads of Department responsible for monitoring their completion for all standards where grades are reported. An external moderation follow-up process that includes documenting required actions and monitoring their completion is in place. This process requires strengthening and is discussed further in this report.

The school is well positioned to respond to the 'digital first' focus of external assessment with the implementation of the Review of the Achievement Standards in 2023. The school has trialled NCEA digital external examinations across a range of subjects and is now preparing to scale up its engagement.

NCEA results analysis at a teacher and department level provides the basis for reflection on the previous year's contexts, standards offered and assessment programmes, to inform next steps. This evidence-based review is reported to Senior Management and the Board of Trustees including an evaluation against annual and strategic goals. Māori student achievement is reported to the Whānau Hui and the Board of Trustees.

The school's data management is effective with accurate and timely internal assessment results and external entries reported to NZQA. A student "sign-off process" confirms the accuracy of external entries and internal grades reported.

Areas for improvement

The school's follow-up to external moderation will be strengthened by the continuation of the Principal's Nominee monitoring that teachers' planned actions will address the issues identified by moderators. This will assist in developing teachers' understanding of the standard and making accurate grade judgements, particularly in subjects where the NZQA moderator has identified a lack of consistency with the national standard.

Some other steps for the school to consider are detailed in the body of the report.

Agreed action

The school agreed that a number of actions will improve the quality of their assessment systems. These are:

- strengthen the follow up to external moderation by checking that planned actions have addressed identified issues and support assessors to make decisions consistent with the standard.



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24 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 1 July 2016 Managing National Assessment Report The report identified two agreed action items. These have been addressed by teachers using subject experts with recent standard-specific assessment experience from within and outside the school to verify assessor judgements. The Principal's Nominee updated the staff handbook as detailed in the report.

Response to external moderation outcomes The school's follow-up to external moderation outcomes requires strengthening to ensure the effective resolution of issues identified by moderators.

The effectiveness of the school's actions in response to external moderation feedback, can be evaluated by selecting these standards for external moderation in future years. The school is encouraged to do this in subject areas of concern to evaluate the effectiveness of strategies to support teacher assessment practice.

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)

Self-review is an embedded practice at Waikato Diocesan School for Girls. Teachers constantly reflect on assessment programmes and practice, modifying learning programmes and individual student assessment plans to best to meet student needs and qualification goals. Their review focuses on providing students with opportunities to engage in learning and assessment experiences that are authentic and inclusive to Waikato-Tainui where appropriate and support individual aspirations. Teachers interviewed demonstrated a shared ownership of credible assessment practice and meeting the needs of individual students.

Student voice is an important aspect of the school's review process. The feedback is used to inform changes to assessment programmes and practice. Annual data analysis is used to evaluate changes made to assessment programmes to ensure students' outcomes are advanced and the assessment and qualification needs of students remain the focus of decision making.

In 2016 the school signed a kawenata (covenant) with Waikato-Tainui. The *Kawenata o te Mana Maatauranga* aims to work with schools, to ensure iwi members, aged 15 years and over, achieve an education qualification. The partnership also provides schools and students with access to Māori industries and mentoring. The Waikato-Tainui Kawenata Educational Initiative seeks to support schools to empower tribal members to pursue meaningful pathways, be grounded in Waikato tikanga, fluent in Waikato reo and connected to their whakapapa and marae. A matrix is also provided for schools to evaluate their on-going progress and guide their support for Māori students to succeed as Māori.

The school's Kaupapa Māori Strategic Plan includes these target areas and they are evaluated against the matrix progressions of *kia tupu, kia hua, kia puawai* (to grow, to prosper, to sustain). The school reviews itself against the four target areas to inform teacher professional learning, evaluate progress, guide their ongoing development and identify next steps. A current school focus is supporting teachers' development of responsive and relational pedagogy with the aim of further differentiating assessment to meet students' needs. The school and whanau have high expectations of academic success for Māori students. Eleven percent of students at Waikato Diocesan School for Girls' identify as Māori and all achieved NCEA Level 1 and 2 in 2020.

Since taking up the role at the start of this year, while the Principal's Nominee is on study leave, the acting Principal's Nominee has conducted a number of departmental reviews with the aim of identifying and sharing areas of good practice, as well as, addressing any shortcomings. The Principal's Nominee facilitates the sharing of effective practice at Heads of Department meetings to support the on-going development of effective and robust assessment processes.

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)

Waikato Diocesan School for Girls has effective processes and procedures for meeting the assessment needs of their students by:

- monitoring and supporting Level 1 literacy and numeracy achievement
- supporting teachers to use relevant and culturally inclusive contexts through ongoing professional learning
- collecting school-based data to support Special Assessment Conditions applications and assisting students to access their entitlement for internal assessment.

Waikato Diocesan School for Girls has effective processes and procedures for:

- delivering consistent school-wide practice for further assessment opportunities, resubmission and missed and late assessment
- reporting Not Achieved for breaches of authenticity and where a student has had an adequate assessment opportunity and provided no work
- monitoring the authenticity of student work submitted
- collecting valid, authentic standard-specific evidence to support derived and unexpected event grades.

Assessment opportunities meet student needs Ongoing review of course design by Heads of Department and teachers, supported by student voice, results in changes to existing assessment programmes and the development of new courses to best meet student abilities, interests and pathway aspirations.

Teachers meet the needs of students by differentiating their assessment practice including assessing students when ready, designing assessment activities with authentic and relevant contexts, and providing students with the choice of standards, and presentation methods. Consistent with students' digital teaching and learning environment, digital external examination opportunities are offered, where available.

Using the flexibility of the NCEA model, assessment programmes are individualised to meet students' pathway aspirations and ability, including providing extension for Year 10 students, multi-level study options and the opportunity to study university papers.

The school engages with outside providers and delivers a Gateway programme which enable students to undertake assessment programmes towards and achieve an increasing range of Vocational Pathways. Where appropriate, assessment programmes of unwell students are modified to support their wellbeing.

Māori engagement and success in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) subjects is a focus The school proactively supports Māori students to enter Science and Technology subjects from Year 9. Ongoing mentoring of Māori students studying STEM subjects by nominated mentors and the Priority Learners Department assists with their achievement.

Māori student participation and achievement in STEM subjects was equivalent to, or better than, that of other ethnicities prior to 2020. Senior Management investigated the decline in 2020 and identified the reason as a change to the school timetable that year. Changes have been made in 2021 to mitigate the impact of the changed timetable to ensure the barrier that the timetable change provided is removed. The school will review Māori student achievement in STEM in 2021 to confirm a positive outcome for students.

The school's high achievement in STEM subjects resulted in them hosting a regional Equity in STEM meeting in November 2019. The school's Head of Sciences was also invited to attend the Equity in STEM working party led by NZQA and MOE, to share their school practice.

Discuss when it is appropriate to withdraw a student from a standard to manage student assessment workload and wellbeing The school has identified an increasing number of students with health issues and therefore has a focus of supporting student well-being. To support teachers to effectively manage students' workload and wellbeing it is recommended senior management discuss and clarify with staff when an internal entry may be withdrawn. Discussion should focus on teachers withdrawing an entry when a student has been absent for most of the teaching and learning, or has a valid reason for not attending or not submitting an assessment, and when arranging an alternative assessment date or extension is not manageable for the student, or the school.

Currently Heads of Department arrange an alternative assessment date or extension for a student to complete a missed assessment or assessment deadline. However, students working to complete assessments where they have been absent a number of days could put them under pressure and have a negative impact on their wellbeing. Allowing students to have the option not to complete an assessment in this circumstance would support the school's wellbeing focus. In these circumstances no result should be reported, and the entry withdrawn.

The discussion with Heads of Department should also include that a Not Achieved grade must be reported for a student for whom there are no mitigating circumstances, who has had an adequate opportunity to be assessed, but failed to avail themselves of this opportunity.

For consideration

To extend good practice in meeting student needs and supporting assessment practice, the school is encouraged to consider:

- discuss with teachers when it would be appropriate to withdraw a student from a standard to best manage their workload and support their well being

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)

Waikato Diocesan School for Girls has effective processes and procedures for managing internal moderation by:

- documenting the internal moderation process for each standard assessed before results are reported to NZQA
- using subject-specialists from within and outside of the school to verify assessor judgements of a purposefully selected sample of student work
- Heads of Department monitoring internal moderation completion and ensuring a copy of each cover sheet is submitted to the Principal's Nominee for checking against submitted results
- the Principal's Nominee completing department visits to review internal moderation practice to provide advice and feedback to further support effective internal moderation practice.

Waikato Diocesan School for Girls has effective processes and procedures for managing external moderation by:

- using a random selection method that meets NZQA requirements
- storing assessed work securely so that it is available, if requested, for external moderation
- developing digital storage protocols to facilitate the submission of external moderation digitally.

Trends in moderation outcomes The consistency of the school's assessor judgements against the standard has declined over the past three years. In five subjects, NZQA moderators have noted a developing trend of inconsistent assessor judgements.

These two trends suggest the school's follow-up to external moderation requires strengthening. Currently, teachers develop a plan of action in response to the external moderation feedback, for discussion with the Principal's Nominee. In 2021, the Principal's Nominee focused these discussions with Heads of Department on ensuring the effectiveness of the planned responses. An effective action will further develop teachers' understanding of the standard and grade boundaries to make accurate assessment decisions particularly in the five subjects with a low assessor/moderator agreement rate.

The school has reviewed the internal moderation processes for standards with a low agreement rate to evaluate the effectiveness of internal moderation. Changes to grade verifiers and teachers referring to benchmark samples and the clarifications documents prior to marking have been implemented. This is good practice.

Staff are encouraged to seek clarification and/or appeal reports to support their understanding of the standard. This is good practice.

Agreed action

NZQA and senior management agree on the following action to improve the school's internal and external moderation to assure assessment quality. Senior management undertakes to:

- strengthen the follow up to external moderation by checking that planned actions have addressed identified issues and support assessors to make decisions consistent with the standard.

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)

Waikato Diocesan School for Girls effectively uses assessment-related data to support achievement outcomes for students by:

- gathering student voice to evaluate courses and inform changes to programmes, contexts and standards
- using NZQA statistical reports to analyse results comparatively and historically to justify future course content
- Heads of Department annually reporting to the Principal and Board of Trustees an analysis of NCEA achievement data by ethnicity against national statistics, and strategic goals.

Waikato Diocesan School for Girls reports accurate achievement data by:

- ensuring that datafiles are submitted to NZQA in a timely manner
- using the NZQA key indicators to identify and resolve data errors
- reporting results against the correct provider codes of external providers and ensuring the school holds a current memorandum of understanding
- supporting and encouraging students to monitor their progress using the student management system student portal and the NZQA learner login
- using a “sign-off process” with students to confirm the accuracy of internally assessed grades reported and external examination entries.

Effective data analysis supports student achievement and identifies next steps

Teachers, Deans, Heads of Department and Senior Management effectively use data to analyse achievement at student, course and year group level. This multi-level analysis enables the school to evaluate progress against annual and strategic goals and respond to trends and concerns at an individual, subject or cohort level. Māori student achievement analysis in Te Reo Māori and overall NCEA achievement is reported to the Term 1 Whānau Hui against strategic and annual goals to inform next steps.

The school has developed a Priority Learners’ Department consisting of the Heads of Advanced Learning, Learning Support and Kaupapa Māori, Dean of International Students and Teacher in Charge of Learning Hub. The focus of this department is to monitor and support students who are on individual assessment programmes that meet their specific learning need or pathway goal. The Priority Learners’ Department focusses on monitoring individual achievement and on-going progress against Individual Education Plans. A feature of this department is the sharing of information and successful strategies to further assist student achievement of academic, learning and pathway goals.

The school's Pastoral Team work closely with Heads of Department and Senior Management to support students at risk of not achieving a qualification. Deans use a traffic light system to track student achievement and identify students who are at risk for intervention. A range of interventions and support structures, including Individual Assessment Plans, changes to academic programmes, and meetings with whānau are used when assessment data analysis indicates an intervention is required.

Review of assessment programme credits is encouraged Changes to the number of credits and the internal / external balance in some Year 11 assessment programmes could assist with managing student assessment workload and support student wellbeing, which the school has identified as an area of concern.

Senior Management is aware that some Year 11 students are achieving more than 120 credits and completing assessment programmes consisting of three externals and two internals. Both can put pressure on students and impact on wellbeing.

The school is encouraged, as part of its ongoing review of assessment programme design, to continue discussion with Heads of Department on the number of credits and the internal/external balance in assessment programmes.

For consideration

To extend good practice in managing and making use of assessment-related data, the school is encouraged to consider:

- reviewing the number of credits students undertake and the internal/external balance in Year 11 assessment programmes.

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))

Waikato Diocesan School for Girls has effective processes and procedures for:

- communicating assessment policy and procedures to staff, students, and their families through hui, written, oral, and digital modes
- regularly reporting on students' progress towards qualifications, including providing online access through the student and parent portal
- supporting teachers new to the school to understand the school's assessment policy and procedures.

Waikato Diocesan School for Girls assists common understanding of assessment practice by:

- using Heads of Department meetings to discuss assessment processes to reinforce school policy and teacher understanding
- informing teachers about assessment best practice and providing opportunities to discuss changes at staff meetings
- strategically timing presentations to year level assemblies to inform students of assessment information and timelines.

Students and staff demonstrate consistent understanding of school assessment procedures Staff and students described a consistent understanding of the school's assessment procedures and where to go to have NCEA questions answered. The school's proactive approach to developing consistent understanding of assessment expectations is based on relevant up-to-date handbooks, and timely communication to students and staff.

Course outline information provided to students needs review Standardised assessment information should be provided to students to make it easier for them to understand. Assessment information provided to students at the start of the year is not consistent in format and some contain assessment policy information. To remove the potential difficulty for students and parents to understand the information and ensure version control, school assessment procedure information should be removed from course outlines and the format be standardised.

Update and correct derived grade information for staff Staff and student information is relevant and available in paper version and on-line. When the staff information is next updated the word "estimated" should be removed from derived grade information to remove any potential confusion and reflect current school practice. Derived grades must come from pre-existing, standard-specific evidence of achievement. Including details of the quality assurance processes of justification and verification for assessments that can be used for derived and unexpected event grades should be included to support the management of teacher assessment workload.

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:

- updating the staff information on derived grades as detailed in this report
- remove assessment information from student course outlines.

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