

**Managing National
Assessment
Report**

2011

Excellere College

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13 and 14 July 2011

Introduction

The purpose of the Managing National Assessment (MNA) external review is to help schools achieve valid, fair, accurate and consistent internal assessment according to the requirements of the *Assessment and Examination Rules and Procedures for Secondary Schools* (Rules and Procedures) and the *Quality Assurance Standard for Secondary Schools* (QASS). It is a partnership between schools and the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) to ensure that assessment systems remain effective and internal assessment decisions are valid.

The MNA review has two components:

1. The annual external moderation of assessment materials and assessor decisions for an NZQA-selected sample of internally assessed standards and randomly selected samples of student work across all curriculum areas selected according to the school's random-selection process.
2. An external review of each school's assessment systems approximately every three to four years, to ensure that assessment is accurate, consistent and to the national standard.

This report summarises NZQA's evaluation of how effectively:

- senior management has addressed issues identified during the previous MNA review on 10 September 2008
- the school manages assessment for national qualifications
- the school manages internal and external moderation
- the school manages and makes use of assessment-related data
- the school maintains the currency of assessment policy and procedures, and communicates them to staff, students and families.

In preparing this report, the School Relationship Manager met with the Principal's Nominee and the Heads of Department (HODs) or Teachers in Charge (TICs) for Computing and Graphics, Music, Physical Education and Science. Prior to the visit, the school completed a pre-review template which provided the SRM with useful information about the school's view of the effectiveness of their procedures.

There was a report-back session with the Principal and the Principal's Nominee at the end of the visit to highlight strengths and weaknesses, with suggested strategies for good practice and to agree on recommended actions.

This MNA report will be used in combination with the most recent Education Review Office Report to reconfirm consent to assess against standards on the New Zealand Qualifications Framework.

2008 Managing National Assessment Report (QASS 1.3v)

Evidence was sought that action items in the previous MNA report have been effectively addressed.

Most of the requirements from the 2008 report have been actioned. Two items that require further action are discussed in this report.

Assessment Practices (QASS 1.2.5v-vii, 1.2.6, 1.3v)

How do the school's assessment practices allow for the effective management of assessment for national qualifications?

Recognising Achievement Teachers show commitment to ensuring that students achieve their potential. Student success is celebrated in a variety of ways, such as during school gatherings, in newsletters and on the school website. The progress of students toward qualifications and meeting numeracy and literacy requirements is monitored by Senior Syndicate teachers. This allows the school to identify and appropriately mentor students at risk of not achieving qualifications.

Gathering evidence of achievement A section on *Assessment Principles* in the staff handbook encourages teachers to make assessment decisions using a range of activities and strategies to identify authentic evidence within the learning process. The school has undertaken to explore this approach further with staff. The school's intention to assess the new literacy and numeracy unit standards will also be a vehicle to enhance staff understanding of gathering alternative forms of evidence of achievement. Such an approach can assist teachers with manageability by limiting over-assessment, especially should a student miss an assessment event or deadline for an acceptable reason. Reference information is published on the NZQA website and includes topics on gathering evidence of achievement and authenticity.

Not Achieved and further assessment opportunities It was apparent during the visit that not all staff share a common understanding of the circumstances where Not Achieved must be reported and about the guidelines for further assessment. To assist staff in their management of internal assessment and to ensure that there is equity for all students, the school has undertaken to monitor that its assessment procedures are understood and are being consistently applied. Methods to achieve this were discussed during the visit. Handbooks are to be updated to inform staff and students that Not Achieved is the outcome where there are no relevant grounds for a missed or late assessment and the student has been offered an adequate assessment opportunity.

Derived grades Management have identified the need to document, and emphasise with staff and students, the guidelines for candidate entitlement to a derived grade and that this must be generated from standard-specific evidence using an appropriate assessment task marked to the national standard.

Identified action

NZQA and senior management agree on the following actions to improve the management of assessment for national qualifications. Senior management will:

- assist staff to understand and apply the broad principles of assessment for recognising student achievement, including the use of a range of strategies for gathering evidence

- ensure that staff understand and apply the school's procedures for reporting Not Achieved, further assessment and derived grades
- ensure that students understand the school's procedures for reporting Not Achieved, further assessment and derived grades.

Moderation (QASS 1.2.6)

How effectively does the school manage internal and external moderation?

Internal moderation processes The PN has been proactive in introducing improved procedures to ensure that effective internal moderation is undertaken for materials used for internal assessment. Teachers are well informed about these procedures and it was apparent during interviews that these are well understood and complied with. All staff interviewed showed that they document their practice using the *Internal Moderation Cover Sheet*. For one subject, the critiquing section of this form had been innovatively modified to document that the task is suitable to assess students at all levels; Achieved, Merit and Excellence. The cover sheet is filed in a central location along with the assessment task, schedule and student work. Prior to submitting results to NZQA, the PN checks these materials, including that a sample of grades have been verified.

By including moderation practice as part of each teacher's annual performance review management become further informed about the effectiveness of the school's practice around internal moderation.

The PN reported that the school requires teachers to engage with a subject colleague outside the school for grade verification purposes and that a professional development priority of the school is to ensure that all staff attend a Moderation Best Practice workshop. It was apparent from discussions that teachers recognise the importance of grade verification and make an effort to overcome the challenge of being a sole teacher for a subject. Teachers reported the use of a range of appropriate verification strategies, including face-to-face professional contact with colleagues, postal or electronic contact, and involvement with a cluster group or subject association. Teachers enhance their professional knowledge by attendance at Moderation Best Practice workshops, the use of 'Optional Teacher Selected Evidence' to obtain moderator feedback, and viewing national moderator reports and NZQA subject resource exemplars.

NZQA-managed external moderation The most recent external moderation round was in October 2010 and the quality of assessment materials used by teachers, as reported by external moderators, had improved since 2009.

All assessment materials submitted in 2010 were deemed to be valid or requiring modification before further use. In most cases, the required modifications were slight and centred on the need to elaborate on assessment schedules, including developing evidence and judgment statements, and/or to update to new versions. The proportion of standards for which the majority of assessor judgments are at the national standard also increased for 2010, and it is anticipated that the improvements in the school's internal moderation practice will ensure a continuation of this trend.

External moderation procedures The school has moved to ensure that all materials are available for external moderation purposes by introducing the requirement to centrally store assessment materials and student work. When required, because of

class size, the school's random selection procedure is used in the selection of samples of student work and it remains for this procedure to be documented for staff.

On the receipt of moderation reports, teachers are required to complete a designated form to indicate how any issue have been addressed. The PN identifies any areas of concern as signalled through moderation reports or teacher response to these and by analysing historical moderation results. This is good practice and ensures that management have the ability to identify, in a timely manner, where support and/or acknowledgement can be provided. Where required, an action plan is put in place to address concerns and an example of this was sighted and discussed during the visit. The PN reports on the results of external moderation to the Board of Trustees.

Identified action

No actions were identified as needed to improve the management of internal and external moderation.

Data (QASS 1.2.6, 1.2.7)

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

Accuracy of assessment-related data For 2011, the school has reviewed and improved its procedures for entering and checking internally assessed results. Teachers record grades as being interim until results are verified. After students sign-off on their final grades and they are entered on to the database in the presence of a colleague as a check that it is done accurately. HODs are responsible for ensuring deadlines for entering grades are met. Further checks are made twice a year when results for individual students are printed and then checked and signed off by students and teachers. Students are also encouraged to monitor their entries and results using their learner login to the NZQA website.

Unreported results In 2010, there was no result reported for 11 per cent of entries for internally assessed standards. Since taking over the role during 2010, the PN has become aware that reporting no result should be limited to unusual circumstances and has introduced appropriate strategies to achieve this for entries from 2011.

Analysis of results and use of assessment-related data To ensure that there is effective use of assessment-related data, the school intends to establish in 2011 a clear process for teachers to analyse and report on results for their subject. This will include an evaluation that can be used to inform teaching practice and to review the extent to which current courses are meeting the needs of students.

For school-wide results, management undertake a thorough analysis each year, including comparing the school's results against national and regional figures and schools of similar decile. Management reports to the Board of Trustees about these results and they are used to inform the process of reviewing the goals of the school.

Identified action

No actions were identified as needed to improve the management and use of assessment-related data.

Communication (QASS 1.2.4i, 1.2.6, 1.3v)

How effectively does the school maintain the currency of assessment policy and procedures, and communicate them to staff, students and families?

Communication of policies and procedures to staff, students and their families

The following documents were provided for this visit:

- *NCEA student Handbook 2011*
- *NQF Operations Manual* (staff handbook)

These documents are updated annually by the PN, are issued to staff and students at the start of each academic year and are also available on the school intranet. The staff handbook includes sound guidance for many areas of assessment practice in these documents. However, as identified and discussed during the visit, there are a number of guidelines and procedures still to be published for staff and for students, including information about reporting Not Achieved, further assessment, derived grades and random selection. A checklist was provided during the visit to assist the school complete its documentation of assessment procedures as required by the school and NZQA.

Other opportunities provided to inform students and/or parents about assessment for qualifications include formal report evenings and parent-teachers interviews.

Assessment statements The *NQF Operations Manual* itemises the type of information about standards to be assessed, which is required to be included in assessment statements for students. The standard number and the availability of a further assessment opportunity are items to be added. The PN has identified that the use of a common format for assessment statements will assist with the communication and monitoring of this information and plans to implement this for 2012. The school is investigating ways to make course and assessment information more accessible to students and parents, such as through the use of moodle.

Staff induction School management reported that an informal procedure is in place for inducting new staff and recognises the need to formally document and implement this so that staff are informed of the school's process and the expectations about this.

Identified action

NZQA and senior management agree on the following actions to maintain the currency of assessment policy and procedures, and communicate them to staff, students and families. Senior management will:

- ensure that all assessment procedures as required by the school and NZQA are documented as appropriate for staff and for students
- ensure that subject course statements include all of the information required about standards to be assessed
- formalise and document the school's staff induction procedure.

Summary

Excellere College is commended for its commitment to ensuring students attain appropriate qualifications and for the sound assessment procedures it has in place.

The school's own evaluation of the effectiveness of its systems for managing assessment for national qualifications revealed no significant issues which prevent it from meeting NZQA requirements. The PN has been proactive in identifying areas that would benefit from further attention or refinement and the school has responded well to address these.

Based on the outcome of this assessment systems check, it is anticipated that the next Managing National Assessment review will be conducted within three years.