

**Managing National Assessment
Report**

School Assessment Systems

2008

ACG Strathallan College

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The purpose of Managing National Assessment (MNA) is to help schools achieve valid, fair, accurate and consistent internal assessment. It is a partnership between schools and the Qualifications Authority and has two components:

- a visit to check and report on the school's assessment systems at least once every three years
- the annual external moderation of assessment materials and assessor decisions for a sample of internally assessed standards across all curriculum areas.

This report summarises the findings of the assessment systems check carried out by an NZQA School Relationship Manager (SRM) on 10 April 2008. The SRM met with the Principal's Nominee (the Nominee) to review developments since the last visit on 1 April 2005 and to appraise the school's assessment policy and procedures against the *Assessment and Certification Rules and Procedures for Secondary Schools*, the *Quality Assurance Standard for Accreditation of Secondary Schools* (QA Standard) and national practice.

The SRM also met with the teacher of English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) who assesses to National Qualifications Framework (NQF) standards, in order to check that the school's policies and procedures are consistently and effectively applied. There was a report-back session with the Principal and his Nominee at the end of the visit to highlight strengths and suggest further good practice.

This and previous MNA reports will be used in combination with the Education Review Office report in reconfirming the school's accreditation.

School Policies and Procedures

2005 Managing National Assessment Report (*QA Standard 1.3v*)

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

The 2005 report required some changes to the school's assessment documentation and suggested some others. All the required changes have been made.

Review of Policy and Procedures *QA Standard 1.2.6, 1.3v*)

Evidence was sought that school-wide assessment policies and procedures have been reviewed and are in line with national practice.

The school's assessment policy is reviewed every three years as part of the policy-review cycle. The procedures documentation is reviewed annually.

National Qualifications Framework The school publishes generic procedures information for teachers in its *National Qualifications Framework Assessment Information Staff Handbook* and for students in the *Student Handbook* for each standard. They contain the purpose for the assessment, set out the programme of learning and assessment and explain how results are to be recorded, how students may redraft and re-present their work and the processes for a missed or late assessment, an appeal, a breach of the rules and special assessment conditions.

Some suggested changes to both handbooks were discussed with the Nominee. Most involve only minor editing or addition.

Course outlines and assessment statements The *Staff Handbook* opens with information on the curriculum, assessment and aim of the ESOL course and on the group of students who will be assessed against NQF standards. The *Student Handbooks* set out the learning programme and the assessment dates week by week over three terms.

There is also an *Assessment Booklet* for each standard. These provide students with the number, version, title, NQF level and credit value of the standard and set out the range statement and performance criteria. The student instructions and conditions and the teacher instructions are also in these booklets, as is a progress checklist for each task and an authenticity attestation.

Authenticity and breaches of the rules All work is done in the classroom and kept there in a file for each student. The teacher actively monitors that students are working on their own and checks any reference material brought in. A sample of each student's written work is filed in case a comparison is needed. A summary of these methods and the rationale for authenticity are provided in the *Student Handbooks* and the consequence of a breach of the rules is explained: the assessment will need to be repeated in a different context.

Missed and late assessments The school minimises these by integrating assessment with learning over three terms. Students are told that they must bring a medical certificate to justify missing an assessment and that they may be given another opportunity in a different context.

Assessment opportunities Under the heading 'Evidence of Achievement', teachers are told that students may submit as many drafts for the writing standard as necessary and that reading log entries may be submitted twice before a new text must be used. Teachers must not correct the work, but are to "lead the student to be able to demonstrate independently" what they can do.

Appeals The process for appealing a grade or another assessment decision is set out in all handbooks. An outside expert may be called in to verify a grade under appeal.

Special assessment conditions These are summarised in the handbooks under the heading 'Special Needs'.

Privacy Act 1993 The teacher guide should consider expanding its reference to the Privacy Act 1993, so that teachers know that no student's personal details, entries or results data or work is to be shown to anyone else without the owner's permission. Students should be informed that they too are subject to these provisions.

Quality Assurance Processes (QA Standard 1.2.6, 1.3v)

Evidence was sought that systems are in place to ensure that:

- *internal moderation is taking place*
- *departments are linking externally to maintain a current understanding of the national standard*
- *concerns raised by external moderation are dealt with.*

Internal moderation The *Staff Handbook* states, “Experienced teachers moderate each assessment activity or task before it is used. Where necessary, adjustments are made and recorded, to assure the integrity of the standard.” To make the meaning clearer, the school should change this to read that teachers must work with a colleague to critique materials before use against the standard and the appropriate level of the curriculum and must modify those materials if necessary. This would better reflect the current good practice. The process is now recorded on a checklist on the *Internal Moderation Cover Sheet*, which is filed with all the other materials for the standard.

The handbook then sets out a robust process for marking and for verifying the grades. This is also now documented on the *Cover Sheet*, rather than on the *Verification of Teacher Marking* form referred to in the handbook.

Teachers also network with colleagues outside the school, as directed in the handbook, to maintain their understanding of the national standard. The *Cover Sheet* provides a space to document this also, as well as a place to indicate that the assessment has been reviewed for future use.

To reflect current practice and to guide any teacher new to the school or to NQF assessment, the school should consider updating the internal moderation section of the *Staff Handbook*:

- All materials, whether sourced commercially, downloaded from websites or developed by teachers, must be *critiqued* prior to use and modified, if necessary, to ensure consistency with the registered standard and appropriateness of language, content and context for students at the school.
- *Consistency* of assessment needs to be managed across classes within a year and from year to year.
- Samples of all assessor judgements should be *verified* by another subject specialist for accuracy and consistency and *benchmark samples* of student work kept, both to inform teachers the next time the assessment is used and in case these materials are needed for external moderation.
- All assessment materials must be *reviewed* prior to further use, taking into consideration any advice from both internal and external moderators.
- Underpinning these guidelines is the need for teachers to engage with their wider professional community to *maintain* their knowledge of national standards.

External moderation This process is summarised for teachers. The moderation plan tracking sheet that can be downloaded from the school’s NZQA provider login website indicates the steps and a sample page from it could be appended to the handbook. Teachers are informed here that their quality assurance is monitored through the school’s appraisal process.

Accreditation The Nominee checks that the school is accredited for all standards teachers plan to assess for the first time. He would also check that a memorandum of understanding (MOU)

was established with an accredited outside provider to assess any standard outside the school's accreditation scope.

Quality Management Systems Documentation (QA Standard Section 2, page 7)

Evidence was sought that the school's Quality Management Systems (QMS) documentation meets the requirements of the Quality Assurance Standard for Accreditation of Secondary Schools, May 2004.

The school's QMS documentation has been updated and is confirmed as meeting the requirements of the *Quality Assurance Standard for Accreditation of Secondary Schools*. It should be kept up to date for future MNA system checks and for any applications to extend the school's accreditation.

Administration (QA Standard 1.2.5v-vii, 1.2.6, 1.2.7)

Evidence was sought of suitable systems and procedures for the management of assessment related data.

The school has a sound process for making entries and verifying results before they are reported to NZQA. The Nominee checks the *Key Indicators* checklist (KI) after the first file is sent to NZQA each year and again after every updated file and resolves any issues the KI reveals.

Teachers are instructed to ensure that all assessments, student work and moderation records are filed securely at the school.

Action Items

The school's systems comply with the *Assessment and Certification Rules and Procedures for Secondary Schools* or the *Quality Assurance Standard for Accreditation of Secondary Schools*.

No action items are required.

In line with good practice as seen nationally, the school should consider:

- updating the internal moderation section of the *Staff Handbook*
- expanding the reference to the Privacy Act 1993 as indicated on page 3 of this report.

Commendations

ACG Strathallan College is commended for the way it has developed its assessment systems to promote student achievement. Quality assurance practices are robust and ESOL teachers are networking effectively with colleagues outside the school.