

# **Managing National Assessment Report**

## **Whangarei Boys' High School**

**September 2018**

## What this report is about

This report summarises NZQA's review of how effectively Whangarei Boys' 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 2018* (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
- *Whangarei Boys' High School Senior Qualifications and Assessment Staff Handbook 2018*
- *Whangarei Boys' High School Senior Qualifications Assessment Handbook 2018* (student handbook)
- a sample of course outlines for Years 11, 12 and 13.

The School Relationship Manager met with the:

- Principal's Nominee (appointed for the start of Term 3)
- Deputy Principal
- The Acting Principal's Nominee for Terms 1 & 2
- three students
- Heads of Faculty or Department for:
  - Arts
  - Health, Physical Education and Outdoor Education
  - Languages
  - Science
  - Social Sciences
  - Technology.

There was a report-back session with the Principal, Principal's Nominee 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

## Whangarei Boys' High School

**4 September 2018**

### **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.

### **What the school is doing well**

Whangarei Boys' High School has taken a number of initiatives to improve assessment practice and outcomes for students. Notable changes have been reducing the number of credits in each course to concentrate on quality learning and the introduction of a project-based engineering course.

All teachers are required to reflect on the outcomes of every assessment event to identify where changes could be made in the teaching and learning programme as well as identifying students who need additional support. The outcomes of the reflections are shared with Heads of Faculties and Line Managers, student concerns are passed to the Deans for follow up.

The Senior Leadership Team uses data to identify where changes could be made for groups or individual students. The data has been used to set targets. Results over the last few years have risen at all three levels of NCEA, with attainment levels now at or above similar schools. Further improvements for 2018 are planned.

Heads of Faculties monitor the completion of robust quality assurance that assures the school's management that results reported to NZQA are credible. The outcomes of external moderation confirm that the processes are effective for the sample of standards submitted.

### **Areas for improvement**

This report suggests a couple of minor improvements in managing quality assurance of results. To ensure that senior management can be fully confident that all results are quality assured, the school has agreed that the senior leaders, who are the Line Managers for the Heads of Faculty, will check a sample to confirm that all the steps of internal moderation have been completed. Any concerns will be passed to the Principal's Nominee and followed up.

Actions planned in response to any issues raised are discussed in the faculty or department. To ensure the effectiveness of the follow up process, it is suggested that the line managers monitor that actions are completed. Heads of Faculties and Line Managers could encourage teachers to select standards to be included in the external moderation plan to maximise the usefulness of feedback.

Students should be further encouraged to register for their Learner login so they can check that NZQA holds accurate data. This also allows them to check results of external assessments and request copies of qualification certificates.

The school's leadership team agrees that it will review the student handbook so that it is written in appropriate language for its intended audience.

It is recommended that the school review the use of the Work and Study Numeracy Unit Standards to ensure that they are used as intended for students who would not otherwise complete the numeracy requirements for an NCEA and are not planning to continue to study Mathematics.

### **Agreed action**

The school agreed on actions to improve the quality of its assessment systems. These are to:

- review how the school's managers confirm that all results are quality assured
- include the Line Manager in the process for following up any issues identified in external moderation.

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15 November 2018

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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 5 & 6 May 2015 Managing National Assessment Report** The school has addressed the items identified in the 2015 Managing National Assessment review.

- Heads of Faculty monitor that the completion of internal moderation is embedded and effective, as agreed after the 2015 review. The moderation section of this report includes recommendations that will enable the Principal's Nominee and the other senior leaders to be fully confident that all grades are underpinned by robust processes.
- As agreed, the school reviewed and amended the assessment procedure handbooks. Suggested next steps are outlined in the communication section of this report.

The following issues have been resolved.

- The school now has uses an appropriate method to make a random selection of work for external moderation.
- Teachers and students understand the expectations for resubmission opportunities.

**Response to external moderation outcomes** The improving external moderation agreement rates reflect the more robust internal moderation processes that the school has implemented since the last review. Heads of Faculty take responsibility for internal moderation and for ensuring that Heads of Department and teachers discuss the outcomes of external moderation and plan for improvement, if indicated. External moderators identified that assessor judgements were consistent with the standard for 80 percent of the standards checked in 2018, an improvement from the less than 60 percent in 2017.

Where issues are identified, it is agreed that the detailed improvement plans developed are expected to be completed by a specified time. These could be shared with Line Managers to follow up that actions are completed and effective. The Line Managers can then provide effective support to improve assessment practice, where required. The Principal's Nominee should monitor any emerging trends in agreement rates. Where an ongoing issue is identified, Heads of Faculty should implement strategies and support to develop teachers' understanding of the assessment criteria so that credible results are reported. This would better ensure that the agreement rate between moderator and teacher is maintained or further improved.

## 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 Principal, Senior Leaders and Heads of Faculty demonstrate they have the capacity to identify issues and resolve them. The rising rates of attainment at all levels of NCEA indicate that the changes are leading to improvement in student outcomes. Some of the changes made as a result of review include the following initiatives.

**The school values the support of a Māori parent group** Kōtuku ki te Rangi assists the school to prioritise powerful and effective student achievement outcomes for their tamariki Māori. The school has set goals to improve the achievement of Māori students. Māori student achievement has risen at all levels of NCEA over the last few years.

**Reducing the number of credits** The school identified that students were being assessed against more credits than required for the qualification. With the agreement of teachers, the credits in each course this year have been reduced to around 15. This is expected to result in less pressure on students. Early indications are that there is more focus on learning rather than simply gaining a large number of credits.

**Review of options led to the introduction of an engineering course** The school identified a group of students who were not engaged and had poor attendance, and concluded their learning and assessment needs were not being adequately met. As a result, a project-based engineering course was established at the start of 2018. The students in this course start and finish their school day later to allow maximum access to workshops. In addition to practical skills, English and Mathematics are taught and assessed in context. The school's early evaluation is that the students are engaged with their learning, producing work they are proud of and are becoming prepared for further study or employment.

**Reflections completed after every assessment event** Each department reflects on the teaching, learning and achievement after each assessment has been completed and all the quality assurance processes have been carried out. They discuss what went well, why it worked and what they could do better. They also note students who have not been successful, and this is shared with the deans.

The Heads of Faculty look at the outcomes of the reflections to determine if they need to make changes in programmes, or contexts, or provide support for some teachers. The outcomes are shared with their Line Managers in the regular meetings, and this effectively provides senior managers and the Principal with a narrative about what is happening in all Faculties.

## Agreed action

NZQA and senior management agree on the following action to improve the school's response to external review and/or its self-review of assessment systems and practice. Senior management undertakes to:

- include the Line Manager in the process for following up any issues identified in external moderation.

## 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 2018 5.5)*

### **Whangarei Boys' High School has effective processes and procedures for meeting the assessment needs of their students by:**

- applying for special assessment conditions. An increasing number of applications used evidence gathered by the school in 2018
- managing further assessment and resubmission opportunities in-line with NZQA requirements.

### **Whangarei Boys' High School has effective processes and procedures for:**

- investigating and resolving issues
- managing missed and late assessments
- ensuring valid evidence is available for derived grades if required
- reporting a Not Achieved result where students have had an adequate assessment opportunity and submitted no work

**Māori and Pasifika engagement and success in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) subjects** The school has noted the lower participation and achievement in STEM subjects for Māori and Pasifika students than for students of other ethnicities. They consider that the recently established engineering course, along with the newly introduced Science course at Level 3, which aims to encourage more students to continue with Science, are addressing some of these needs. Careers New Zealand recommends that students should study English, Mathematics and at least one Science subject, particularly if they don't have a specific career in mind.

**Ensure that all teachers keep results private** The students commented that there have been instances where teachers share individual grades with the class. There is no evidence that this is widespread, however the senior managers will remind teachers to keep results private to the student concerned, as required by the *Privacy Act 1993*.

**Review use of Numeracy Unit Standards** A large number of students are being assessed against the Work and Study Skills Unit Standards to meet the NCEA numeracy requirements. These are designed for students who are not planning to study mathematics at a higher level. Many of the students who have been assessed against these standards in the last two years have demonstrated achievement at a much higher level and so are not the learners that these standards are intended for. As a result, some students may reduce their aspirations and this should be an area for review.

### **For consideration**

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

- reviewing the use of the Work and Skills Unit Standards to meet numeracy requirements.



## 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 2018 6.4b)*

### **Whangarei Boys' High School has effective processes and procedures for managing internal moderation by:**

- ensuring all assessment materials are critiqued prior to use
- using subject specialists to verify a purposefully selected sample of student work including colleagues outside the school for sole teachers
- documenting the completion of all the steps of internal moderation
- Heads of Faculty monitoring that the school's expectations are met for all standards before results are reported to NZQA.

### **Whangarei Boys' High School has effective processes and procedures for managing external moderation by:**

- selecting samples of student work randomly to NZQA requirements
- ensuring samples of student work are provided by being adequately stored.

**Ensure the school management knows that robust quality assurance supports every grade** At the time of the 2015 review, the school agreed to check that the procedure for Heads of Faculty to monitor internal moderation is imbedded and effective. The Heads of Faculty described their processes and evidence was sighted during the visit. The next step is for the Line Managers to sample and follow up on any concerns. This assurance should be shared with the Principal's Nominee to identify and prevent any issues from affecting the credibility of results.

**Focus on reducing workload by considering sufficiency of requirements for grade verification** Departments assure the quality of grades awarded by including work at grade boundaries when verifying assessor judgements. However, some of those interviewed verify more samples of student work than this. The school should consider providing staff with further guidance on sufficient verification by the strategic selection of student work.

Strategic selection has the potential to reduce verifier workload, without compromising the quality of the assurance process. There is no fixed, or predetermined, number of pieces of student work that must be verified. The sample size will be determined by factors such as assessor experience, feedback from external moderation, the availability of good quality grade boundary exemplars, and number of students assessed.

**Invite Heads of Faculties to request standards to be externally moderated** To provide useful feedback on assessment judgments, teachers are able to request standards to be included in the school's external moderation plan. It is recommended that the Principal's Nominee invites faculties to take advantage of this.

**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:

- review how the school's managers are assured that all results are quality assured.

**For consideration**

To extend school practice in assurance of assessment quality, the school is encouraged to consider:

- invite Heads of Faculty to request standards to be included in the external moderation plan.

## 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)*

### Whangarei Boys' High School effectively:

- uses assessment-related data to support achievement outcomes for students by:
  - having regular data hui to identify students at risk of not meeting their qualifications goals and implementing support programmes
  - celebrating student achievement by acknowledging academic success.
- reports accurate achievement data by:
  - checking the accuracy of external entries prior to the 1 September data submission to ensure minimal late entries
  - reporting results against the correct provider codes of outside providers with which the school holds current memoranda of understanding
  - encouraging students to use the portal into the student management system to check data and monitor their progress.

**Encourage students to use their Learner login** Without registering, students cannot check the accuracy data held by NZQA, request reviews or reconsiderations for external examination papers or order copies of their Record of Achievement and/or qualification certificates. About three-quarters of the students being assessed for National Qualifications registered and used their NZQA Learner login in 2017.

Students use their portal into the school's student management system to check their progress. However, as only results reported to NZQA are counted toward the award of an NCEA, the portal does not allow students to identify any reporting errors or omissions. It is suggested that teachers assist individual students to realise the importance of registering for, and using, their Learner login.

### For consideration

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

- encouraging all students to register and use their NZQA Learner login.

## **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))*

### **Whangarei Boys' High School has effective processes and procedures for:**

- ensuring students receive outlines for all courses they undertake
- communicating assessment policy and procedure
- supporting teachers new to the school
- reviewing communications to ensure they are fit for purpose and current.

### **Whangarei Boys' High School assists common understanding of assessment practice by:**

- providing teachers, students and parents with information about processes
- informing teachers about assessment best practice and providing opportunities to discuss changes
- knowing that students understand what they need to achieve in order to gain a qualification.

**Student handbook review suggested** The current Senior Qualifications Assessment Handbook provides students with access to information about assessment processes but is not very student friendly. It would be timely to look at the handbook to ensure that it reflects current practice and the language is appropriate for the audience. The appointment of a new Principal's Nominee provides an ideal opportunity to review communications.

### **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:

- reviewing the student handbook to ensure it is appropriate to the intended audience.