

Managing National Assessment Report

Dargaville High School

April 2018

What this report is about

This report summarises NZQA's review of how effectively Dargaville 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
- copies of relevant policies
- *Dargaville High School National Certificate of Educational Achievement Student Handbook 2018*
- *NQF / NCEA Assessment and Moderation Handbook (Staff Handbook)*
- *NCEA Assessment Good Practice Guide for Teachers*
- a sample of course outlines for Years 11, 12 and 13.

The School Relationship Manager met with the Principal's Nominee, three students and Heads of Department for English, Mathematics, Physical Education and Science and the Teachers in charge of Commerce and Japanese.

There was a report-back session with the Principal's Nominee 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. The Principal was unavailable at the end of the visit but was subsequently contacted by telephone.

SUMMARY

Dargaville High School

11 April 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

Dargaville High School offers a range of academic and vocational assessment pathways to meets students' needs. Learners are supported to set academic and career goals and encouraged to monitor their own progress. Where manageable, students are assessed when ready, with individual programmes being agreed if appropriate.

Internal moderation practice is an embedded culture. All teachers have developed professional contacts with colleagues both within the school and in other schools to verify a selection of grade judgements. Teachers are expected to plan to address any issues raised in external moderation. Teachers value both the internal and external moderation processes and use these for their professional learning as well as to confirm assessment decisions.

The school demonstrates that it is capable of self-review. The recent focus has been to ensure there are relevant pathways available to students and that the school's expectations around assessment practice are consistently applied.

A range of communication systems are in place to ensure staff, students and parents have access to information about the NCEA qualification and the school's policy and procedures. Students appreciate the individual support provided by their teachers.

The Principal's Nominee is experienced in the role. She oversees the school's credible assessment practice and her leadership is appreciated by the teachers.

Areas for improvement

The school agrees that it will strengthen the process that confirms that issues raised in external moderation are addressed promptly. While there is no evidence to suggest that teachers are not addressing the issues, having a robust process would mean that Senior Leaders can be confident that concerns have been identified and effectively addressed in a timely manner.

For larger classes the selection of student work for verification should be purposeful and include work at grade boundaries. This provides assurance to the Principal's Nominee that the process is robust, and teachers collect useful benchmarks samples while managing workload.

There are some refinements suggested for the course outlines that will clarify for students the standards that will be assessed or may be optional. It is recommended that the student handbooks be reviewed to ensure they are easily usable. As well, some of the information taken from the NZQA website could be replaced by links from the digital copy on the school's website.

Agreed action

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

- develop a process to monitor that the actions planned to address issues raised in external moderation reports are completed
- remind teachers that student work for internal verification should be selected purposefully to include work at grade boundaries
- ensure that course outlines accurately convey the intended assessment programme, making it clear if some standards are optional.

Kay Wilson
Manager
School Quality Assurance and Liaison

25 May 2018

NZQA

0800 697 296

www.nzqa.govt.nz

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 22 & 23 July 2015 Managing National Assessment Report

There were several agreed items at the last review. The school has addressed all but one item. This was the requirement that all changes identified in the external moderation process are put in place. It needs more action to allow the Principal's Nominee to be fully confident that teachers are completing what they have planned.

The actions taken to address the other items were:

- Updating of the staff and student handbooks as agreed. Some further suggestions are included in the communication section of this report.
- The Principal's Nominee working with staff to ensure that they understand the expectations for resubmissions.
- The school process to ensure that evidence for a derived grade is authentic.
- The Principal's Nominee introducing a robust system for monitoring that internal moderation is completed.
- The school adopting an appropriate system to ensure that samples of work for external moderation are randomly selected.

Response to external moderation outcomes The school complies with the requirements to submit work for external moderation. Teachers are expected to plan to address any issues identified. However, the school does not yet have a process for checking that issues have been effectively addressed. While there is no evidence to suggest that teachers are not addressing the issues, a robust process would mean that Senior Leaders can be confident that concerns have been identified and effectively addressed in a timely manner.

Response to data issues The most recent ERO report recommended that the school develop a Māori strategic education plan with a focus on increasing parity in achievement for Māori students. The Senior Management team at the school has noted the lower participation and achievement in STEM subjects for Māori and Pasifika students than for students of other ethnicities and has started conversations with teachers about this will be addressed.

Internal review

Teachers and the senior management are involved in an ongoing cycle of self-review around assessment practice. The outcomes include that:

- more courses are now available to students, ensuring that there are diverse pathways that include university preparation and vocational academies. The school is currently investigating the feasibility of an Environmental Science Academy

- the Principal's Nominee has reviewed staff understanding and practice around extensions, resubmissions, further assessment opportunities, authenticity, appeals and breaches to ensure consistency and compliance with NZQA's expectations
- students who may be eligible to use special assessment conditions trial completing assessments in Year 10 using extra time, a laptop or teacher aid to determine what best suits their needs
- the school now has a Good Practice Guide for teachers to use if they are uncertain of the school's procedures and policies around managing assessment for qualifications.

Evidence found that the school is effectively 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)

Agreed action

NZQA and senior management agree on the following action to improve the school's response to external review. Senior management undertakes to:

- develop a process to monitor that the actions planned to address issues raised in external moderation reports are completed.

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)

Dargaville High School has effective processes and procedures for meeting the assessment needs of their students by:

- providing vocational academies in building and construction, hospitality and primary industries
- extending assessment opportunities by using FarNet
- applying for special assessment conditions on behalf of identified students using school-based evidence
- providing appropriate support for students entitled to use special assessment conditions
- providing differentiated assessment programmes within courses
- assessing when ready, where manageable.

Dargaville High School has effective processes and procedures for:

- managing extensions and missed and late assessments
- investigating appeals of assessment decisions
- informing students about the requirements to produce authentic work and investigating any suspected plagiarism
- ensuring derived grades are based on standard-specific authentic evidence from practice examinations
- meeting the requirements of the Privacy Act 1993.

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 2018 6.4b)

Dargaville High School has effective processes and procedures for managing internal moderation by:

- ensuring all assessment materials are critiqued prior to use
- using subject specialists, from within the school as well as external colleagues, to verify a sample of student work
- documenting the completion of the steps of internal moderation and monitoring that these are completed before grades are submitted to NZQA.

Dargaville High School has effective processes and procedures for managing external moderation by:

- inviting departments to request standards to be included in the external moderation plan
- selecting samples of student work for external moderation randomly to NZQA requirements
- ensuring samples of student work are provided for external moderation by being adequately stored
- encouraging teachers to submit work for external moderation digitally if the evidence of achievement is produced digitally.

Purposeful selection for internal moderation Heads of Departments discussed the range of methods used to verify that grades awarded are consistent with the standard. For some departments, teachers are selecting a random sample rather than a purposeful selection. This can result in additional workload. NZQA expects that a sufficient and purposeful selection of work, generally that at grade boundaries, will be verified so that the school can be confident that grades are valid. A sufficient sample will take into account the number of students assessed, feedback from external moderation and the experience of the teacher with that standard.

Some teachers are recording brief notes on the reason for an assessment decision as part of the verification process. This good practice assists with future judgments and helps assure the Principal's Nominee that the process is robust. All teachers could be encouraged to note reasons and this could be part of the internal moderation monitoring process.

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:

- remind teachers that student work for internal verification should be selected purposefully to include work at grade boundaries.

For consideration

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

- encouraging all teachers to record the reason for an assessment decision as part of the verification process.

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)

Dargaville High School effectively:

- **uses assessment-related data to support achievement outcomes for students by:**
 - setting clear achievement targets for each cohort and supporting teachers to take steps to endeavour to ensure the target is met
 - carrying out a deep analysis of achievement data to identify areas for improvement
 - assisting them to track their progress towards completing a qualification
 - engaging with the Starpath programme to help teachers analyse data
- **reports accurate achievement data by:**
 - checking external entries prior to the 1 September data submission to ensure minimal late entries
 - withdrawing students from internally assessed standards who do not have an adequate assessment opportunity
 - reporting results against the correct provider codes of outside providers with which the school holds current memoranda of understanding.

Starpath mentoring programme helps students to meet their achievement goals The school is working with the Starpath programme to improve achievement. As part of this, students evaluate how they are progressing in each subject. Their assessment is compared with their teacher's estimation of success in a *Rated Assessment Guide*. If students are not on track to meet their goals, the Dean helps them to identify strengths and recognise barriers to success. Where appropriate the programme in a course may be individualised, a student may change subjects or enrol in a Gateway programme.

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))

Dargaville High School has effective processes and procedures for:

- ensuring students receive outlines for all course they undertake
- communicating assessment policy and procedure to teachers
- supporting teachers new to the school to be clear about expectations.

Dargaville High School assists common understanding of assessment practice by:

- informing teachers about assessment best practice and providing opportunities to discuss changes
- talking with students and parents about expectations around assessment and requirements for qualifications
- providing information about assessment processes in school newsletters.

Changes to documentation indicated Clear and consistent information about the assessment programme in each course helps students to plan to meet expectations. The course statements provided for this review followed a consistent format and contained key information. However, some outlines did not give information about whether some standards were optional, which could mislead students.

The student handbook is very comprehensive. It is available on the school's website for parents. When it is next reviewed, it is suggested it may be more usable if some of the information taken from the NZQA website is replaced by links. However, students are aware of expectations and their responsibilities.

Agreed action

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

- ensure that course outlines accurately convey the intended assessment programme, making it clear if some standards are optional

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 check that it best meets the needs of its intended audience.