

Managing National Assessment Report

Otamatea High School

October 2017

What this report is about

This report summarises NZQA's review of how effectively Otamatea 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 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, in combination with the most recent Education Review Office report 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 2017* (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
- *Assessment Policies and Procedures 2017* (Staff Handbook)
- *Assessment Procedures and Requirements for Assessment of NCEA Standards 2016 - 2018* (Student Handbook)
- 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 Learning Areas for the Arts, Health and Physical Education, Mathematics, Science, Social Sciences and Technology.

There was a report-back session with the Principal and 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.

SUMMARY

Otamatea High School

26 October 2017

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

Otamatea High School offers a range of academic and vocational assessment pathways to meet students' needs. Learners are well supported to set academic and career goals and their progress is closely monitored by their academic counsellors. Students appreciate the individual support provided by their teachers.

Internal moderation is an embedded culture. All teachers have developed professional contacts either within the school or with colleagues in other schools to verify a selection of grade judgements. The Principal's Nominee monitors compliance before results are submitted to NZQA. The school has a sound agreement rate for external moderation and teachers plan on how to address any issues raised. Teachers value both the internal and external moderation processes and use it for their professional learning as well as to confirm their assessment decisions.

The school demonstrates that it is capable of self-review. A recent focus has been to gather detailed data to track ongoing student progress and plan for improving student achievement. The Principal's Nominee is confident that the recent improvements can be maintained. The school has identified that a next step is to work with all teachers to increase the use of digital technologies, particularly *Google Classrooms*, for learning and assessment.

The Principal's Nominee is effective in the role. The Heads of Learning Areas appreciate his approachability and the clear systems he has implemented. His leadership is evident in the provision of the standardised data that enables Heads of Learning Areas to provide meaningful reports to Board of Trustees and plan for improvement.

Areas for improvement

The school agreed that it could strengthen the process which confirms that issues raised in external moderation are fully addressed. Having a documented process would mean that school can be confident that concerns have been identified and effectively addressed in a timely manner.

It is good practice to note the reasons for an assessment decision so that there is a useful record for when the standard is used again. This is not happening consistently in all learning areas. The Principal's Nominee could check this as part of the monitoring or auditing process to assure that the process is robust. A further

advantage is that teachers collect useful, annotated benchmarks samples without additional workload.

It is suggested that handbooks be reviewed annually to ensure they are up to date and reflect the practice in the school. The current student handbook is not student-centred and reviewing this should be a priority so that students have access to comprehensive and accurate information. As part of this review, the school could consider whether digital versions of the student and teacher handbooks would better meet the need of the intended audience.

Agreed action

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

- ensure that actions planned to address issues identified in external moderation are completed.
- review the student handbook.

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25 January 2018

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FINDINGS OF THIS REVIEW

How effectively has the school responded to external and internal review?

External review

Evidence found that external review actions have been appropriately and effectively addressed. (CAAS Guidelines 2.6iv, 3iv-3v)

Action Items from 12 and 13 August 2014 Managing National Assessment Report The school has completed the actions it agreed to after the 2014 review.

Response to external moderation outcomes The school has had a sound agreement rate in external moderation over the past few years. The Principal's Nominee reviews all the outcomes from external moderation and works with the Heads of Learning Areas to plan actions to address any identified issues. To ensure that the planned improvements are made, it is suggested that the Principal's Nominee either sights evidence of issues being addressed or Heads of Learning Areas attest that actions have been completed. The school agreed to consider the suggestion that the Learning Area report to the Board of Trustees includes a summary of the outcomes of external moderation along with a confirmation that the planned actions have been completed. This would provide assurance to the school's managers that there is a robust process to follow up external moderation

Internal review

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)

The school reflected on the levels of student achievement, finding areas for improvement. To address these, all Heads of Learning Areas are now provided with good quality data by the Principal's Nominee and are expected to identify and implement changes that lead to higher levels of engagement and success. In 2016 the achievement at all levels of NCEA showed an improvement and the school is confident that it is on track to maintain the improvement in 2017. The Principal's Nominee commented that the learning areas in which achievement results are improving also have a good understanding of their data.

Other examples of self-review were discussed with the Principal's Nominee. Some outcomes include:

- requiring teachers to have student work marked, verified and marks entered in the student management system within three weeks of the students completing the work. This supports the close tracking of student progress towards completing a qualification or meeting their individual goals
- strengthening the academic counselling process by making the groups smaller and giving teachers access to up-to-date and accurate information about student progress. The students appreciated the support of their vertical form teachers as their academic counsellors
- allowing students study leave only when they have completed their qualification goals. The extra learning time is used to complete assessments, for a further assessment opportunity after more learning, or for new learning with appropriate assessment tasks

- strengthening the evidence checks on teacher compliance with internal moderation, so the school can be confident that no grades are submitted to NZQA unless the Principal's Nominee has evidence that quality assurance processes have been completed
- introducing an individualised Pathways class for Year 12 and 13 students who aim to transition to employment. These students are assessed against a core of common standards then guided into a self-directed programme that might include work experience and participation in a learning programme with an external provider. Students aim to complete a cohesive programme including at least one Vocational Pathway

The school has decided that the next areas for self-review are to review how they implement the curriculum and to ensure that all teachers are confident to use *Google Classroom* to gather evidence of achievement.

Agreed action

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

- ensure that actions planned to address issues identified in external moderation are completed.

How effectively does the school's assessment practice meet the needs of its students?

Evidence found that assessment practice is meeting student needs. (CAAS Guidelines 2.5v-vii, 2.6i & ii and Assessment (including Examination) Rules for Schools with Consent to Assess 2017 5.5)

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

- closely tracking the progress of every student and providing additional support for students who are at risk of not completing a qualification
- ensuring teachers are aware of individual students with an entitlement to special assessment conditions and providing these resources for internal assessment
- assisting students to present authentic work by requiring them to confirm that work is their own, checking work as it is being completed and, if there is doubt, collecting additional evidence of achievement orally
- requiring all students to complete the scheduled assessment programme unless there are unusual circumstances, but differentiating the expectations to meet individual needs
- engaging with outside providers to extend the range of academic and vocational assessment opportunities offered.

Otamatea High School has effective processes and procedures for:

- managing missed and late assessments, resubmissions and further assessment opportunities to be fair to students and meet NZQA's expectations
- investigating and resolving appeals and breaches of the rules
- ensuring valid evidence is available for derived grades if a student misses an external assessment due to circumstances beyond their control
- meeting the requirements of the *Privacy Act 1993*.

Review course design Many students are being assessed against more credits than needed to meet their qualification goal. This can contribute to stress for students and impact on teacher workload. The school agreed to consider reviewing course design and the advice given to teachers on the number of credits in a course, to ensure that there is a balance between the deep, quality learning that the school is aiming for and the number of credits students need to complete the qualification.

Better outcomes for Māori students The school is aiming to improve Māori success by being more culturally inclusive and working closely with whānau. One teacher now has specific responsibility to track and promote Māori achievement. The school considers that this initiative is successful and achievement at NCEA Levels 1, 2 and 3 shows a general upward trend. The success rate for Māori students in achieving university entrance, however has dropped over the last two years.

For consideration

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

- reviewing the number of credits in courses.

How effectively does the school's internal and external moderation assure assessment quality?

Evidence found that internal and external moderation are ensuring assessment quality. (CAAS Guidelines 2.6iii & vi, and Assessment (including Examination) Rules for Schools with Consent to Assess 2017 6.4b)

Otamatea 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
- documenting the completion of internal moderation on the *Internal Moderation Cover Sheet*
- monitoring that the school's quality assurance requirements have been completed before grades are submitted to NZQA.

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

- 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.

Next steps to improve internal moderation practice Recording brief notes about the outcome of a verification discussion both assures the Principal's Nominee that the process has been robust and reduces workload for teachers next time the standard is used. Some teachers at Otamatea High School keep a record of the discussions on the internal moderation cover sheet or on the student work, but not all teachers consistently make these useful notes. To improve practice, it is suggested that the monitoring process checks that brief summaries of the verification discussions are recorded.

Teachers provided evidence of the connections they have with colleagues both within the school and in other schools to verify a sample of their assessor judgements. Discussions are held both face-to-face or by email. Most teachers are selecting the samples purposefully for verification to include work at grade boundaries as required. This good practice encourages a robust process and should be checked as part of the monitoring process.

For consideration

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

- expecting all teachers to make brief notes of verification discussions.

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

Evidence found that data management and use supports student achievement outcomes. (CAAS Guidelines 2.6v, 2.7i-iii)

Otamatea High School effectively:

- **uses assessment-related data to support achievement outcomes for students by:**
 - providing all staff with accurate and up-to-date data on the progress of the students in their classes and their vertical form class
 - requiring Heads of Learning Areas to carefully analyse results data at the start of the year and plan how to improve student achievement
- **reports accurate achievement data by:**
 - using the Key Indicators to identify and resolve data submission errors
 - requiring students to confirm that the grades held in the school's student management system are accurate
 - supporting students to use their Learner login to track their NCEA progress.

Strong data analysis at start of year It was evident in this visit that the school makes effective use of data provided by NZQA to improve teaching and learning and student achievement. The Principal's Nominee produces a summary for the Heads of Learning Areas who use the data to plan for improvement and report to the Board of Trustees. Results are compared with other similar schools and nationally. Some strategies to improve student engagement include reviewing the standards in the course, changing the order of topics, introducing different contexts or assessment tasks.

Close tracking during year The Principal's Nominee has devised a tracking sheet within the school's student management system that analyses the number of credits gained and the quality of these credits (achieved, merit or excellence) against the total number assessed. This tracking allows the school to make timely and targeted interventions for students at risk of not achieving a qualification, as well as identifying and supporting the more able students to achieve at higher levels.

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 found that school communication ensures understanding about assessment. (CAAS Guidelines 2.4i(f), 2.4v, 2.6vii, 2.7ii(b))

Otamatea High School has effective processes and procedures for:

- ensuring students receive outlines for all courses they undertake
- communicating assessment procedure and expectations to teachers, students and parents
- ensuring that new Heads of Learning Areas are well supported.

Otamatea High School assists common understanding of assessment practice by:

- checking whether teachers and students are following 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.

Review student handbook The current handbook is not very student centred and the school has agreed that a review would be timely. Students should receive information about school policies and practices and course assessment programmes at the start of each year. At Otamatea High School, the students were generally well informed about most expectations, although were unaware that there was a handbook. As part of this review the school could consider if a digital format would make it easy to be keep up-to-date for students to access.

The students enjoyed participating in the Kahoot Quiz early in the year that tested their knowledge of NCEA and associated processes, but they were not all aware that derived grades can only come from pre-existing standard specific evidence and of their right to appeal an assessment decision. Easy access to information (paper or digital) can help students and parents to be well informed.

Ensure the staff handbook is up-to-date The current edition of the staff handbook covers the three years 2016 – 2018. It is good practice is to review this annually so that any changes can be incorporated. Reviewing the document also serves as a check that expectations and practice align. Having this as a digital document can make it both easy to update and easy for teachers to access.

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:

- review the student handbook.

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:

- implementing an annual review cycle for both the staff and student handbooks.