

Managing National Assessment Report

Ruawai College

July 2018

What this report is about

This report summarises NZQA's review of how effectively Ruawai College:

- 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
- Ruawai College National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) Student Handbook 2018
- Ruawai College NCEA 2018 Handbook for Teachers
- course outlines for Years 11, 12 and 13.

The School Relationship Manager met with the Principal's Nominee, three students, and the Learning Leaders for Digital Technology, English, Mathematics, Physical Education, Science and Visual Arts.

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

Ruawai College

25 July 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 with a check in one year to ensure that delays in completing verification have been resolved.

What the school is doing well

Ruawai College offers a range of academic and vocational assessment pathways to meet students' needs. Learners are supported to set academic and career goals which are monitored by their Learning Advisors. The school aims to provide a friendly, warm, family environment, to care for students and get to know them well, and students appreciate the individual support provided by their teachers.

The school demonstrates that it is capable of self-review. There is a focus on gathering student voice to inform decision making. Students value the opportunity to participate and influence their learning programme.

For most teachers, internal moderation is an embedded culture and they are developing professional contacts with colleagues in other schools to verify a selection of grade judgements. The Principal's Nominee has identified the need ensure that any issues raised in external moderation are addressed. Teachers value external moderation, using the feedback for their professional learning as well as to confirm their assessment decisions.

The Principal's Nominee is new to the role this year. She works with the support of the Principal and Senior Leadership Team to oversee the school's credible assessment practice. Teachers appreciate her efficiency and approachability.

Areas for improvement

The school agrees that the delay between students completing an assessment and the grades being available needs to be reduced. A faster turnaround would be fairer to students, make it easier for the Learning Advisors to mentor students, and provide timely interventions. Some of the delay is because teachers have not arranged a verifier in advance of assessment taking place. This could be better managed by establishing connections well in advance and making genuine offers to reciprocate. Verifying work for colleagues can be valuable professional development, as well as providing the opportunity to benefit from moderation feedback on standards verified for colleagues.

The Principal's Nominee must ensure that a random selection of student work is submitted for external moderation. However, the selection of student work for internal verification should be purposeful and include work at grade boundaries. When the class is small, this may include all samples, but for larger classes a strategic

selection is recommended. Noting comments on the reasons for an assessment judgement provides assurance that the process is robust, and provides teachers with useful benchmark samples, while managing workload.

Students were not sure about the requirements for the qualification they are aiming for. This information is in the handbook issued late in term 2. Next year, the school plans to ensure that the information is provided much earlier. The Principal's Nominee has identified that the handbook is due for a review and it is suggested that consideration is given to making a digital copy available on the school's website. Along with reviewing the handbook, the Principal's Nominee plans to standardise what is included on the outline for each course so that accurate information is provided about each assessment programme.

Agreed action

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

- arranging verifiers in advance of assessment and sharing external moderation feedback with the verifiers to consolidate their understanding of the standard
- ensure that a random selection of student work is selected for external moderation
- review the student handbook and ensure that it is available for students near the start of the year.

Kay Wilson
Manager
School Quality Assurance and Liaison

26 October 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 25 & 26 March 2015 Managing National Assessment Report

There were no significant issues identified in the 2015 review. The school has addressed all but one of the agreed items and as a result:

- the Principal's Nominee monitors the completion of internal moderation
- students remain entered into internally assessed standards if they have a reasonable opportunity to be assessed
- the staff and student handbooks have been reviewed, with more action planned.

The remaining item, the need to ensure there is a random selection of student work for external moderation, will be fully implemented for the next moderation round.

Response to external moderation outcomes The new Principal's Nominee agrees that Learning Leaders will take responsibility for planning their response to external moderation. She is currently reviewing how to ensure that actions are timely, effective in resolving any issues and monitored for completion. At the time of the visit, the school was in the process of submitting work for the 2018 external moderation round so finalising the response process is a priority.

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)

Ruawai College is very active in seeking student voice for input into review or changes. Response is sought for school-wide issues or by individual teachers about the learning programme. Common ways to get student voice are by using Google Forms or through the two student councils. The outcomes inform decision making by the school's senior leaders. "What do students think?" is a regular question at Head of Learning meetings. Students confirm that they are consulted, and feel that their response is valued and leads to change.

The school has improved access to special assessment conditions for entitled students. In 2017, 16 percent of students were approved with the majority of applications supported by school-based evidence. While this rate of applications is higher than in similar schools, there is no evidence that any students are receiving inappropriate support.

Learning Leaders prepare an annual report that summarises assessment outcomes overall and broken down by ethnicity and gender. The reports include analysis on the reason for a pattern of results and reflection on how to maintain or improve learning outcomes the following year. The Deputy Principal summarises the outcomes for the Board of Trustees, who use the information to set targets.

The school's self-review practices enable the Senior Leadership Team to identify areas for improvement in ensuring the credibility of results.

No action required

No issues with the school's response to NZQA external reviews and/or its self-review of assessment systems and practice were identified during this review.

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)

Ruawai College has effective processes and procedures for meeting the assessment needs of their students by:

- applying for special assessment conditions and providing appropriate support for eligible students
- extending the range of options available to students by using FarNet
- having learning advisors mentor students and arrange additional support if appropriate
- participating in NZQA digital Science trials
- assessing when ready, where manageable, in some learning areas.

Ruawai College has effective processes and procedures for:

- managing an examination centre including having a succession plan for the Examination Centre Manager and hosting students from another school
- managing missed and late assessment
- ensuring that students understand how to present authentic work
- investigating appeals of grades
- ensuring evidence for derived grades is valid
- meeting the requirements of the Privacy Act 1993.

Māori and Pasifika engagement and success in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) subjects The Senior Leadership Team at the school has noted the lower participation and achievement in STEM subjects for Māori and Pasifika students when compared with students of other ethnicities. They intend to plan how to address the differences. 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.

Extended time for students to be notified of grades hampers effective mentoring for success Students and senior managers share concerns about the delay in getting provisional and confirmed grades to students. It is difficult for the learning advisors to mentor students without access to accurate and up to date data about progress. Teachers commented that some of the delay is due to the use of verifiers outside the school or that they have not organised a verifier until students have completed the assessment. Some teachers at Ruawai College are reluctant to verify work from other schools. As well as providing useful professional learning, offering to help another school may make it easier to find colleagues to reciprocate.

Learning Advisors work with students to help them to set goals and monitor individual progress towards those goals. Where it is identified that students are at risk of not achieving a qualification, additional support is provided, including involving parents, running additional classes and providing individualised programmes.

Number of credits in each course under review The Senior Leadership Team has identified reducing the number of credits students are assessed against as an area for review. Currently, students are being assessed against more credits than required to gain the qualification they are aiming for. The teacher handbook suggests that a course should include 18 – 24 credits. While the curriculum needs to be covered, over-assessment increases stress for students and additional workload for teachers.

For consideration

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

- reviewing practice to determine how grades can be finalised more quickly
- ensuring the number of credits in a course is manageable and provides a foundation for further study.

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)

Ruawai College 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 sample of student work
- documenting the completion of the process on an Internal Moderation Cover Sheet
- monitoring that the school's requirements have been met before confirmed grades are reported to NZQA.

Ruawai College has effective processes and procedures for managing external moderation by:

- ensuring samples of student work are provided through being adequately stored.

Focus on reducing workload by considering verification requirements for sufficiency In most learning areas the quality of grades awarded is assured by including work at grade boundaries when verifying assessor judgements. However, some teachers verify more samples than this or make a random selection. 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 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. As well, teachers should be encouraged to record the outcomes of the verification discussion on a piece of work at a grade boundary to help when making future assessment decisions. Sharing outcomes with verifiers can also confirm understanding. Notes of discussions can provide evidence of a robust process.

Random Selection process for external moderation needs to be updated The school is using a method for selecting student work for external moderation that no longer meets NZQA's requirements. The Principal's Nominee agrees that in future, the selection will be made using the school's student management system, so that the sample cannot be predicted.

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:

- arranging verifiers in advance of assessment and sharing external moderation feedback with the verifiers to consolidate their understanding of the standard
- ensure that a random selection of student work is selected for external moderation as required by NZQA.

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)

Ruawai College effectively:

- **uses assessment-related data to support achievement outcomes for students by:**
 - annually reporting to the Principal and Board of Trustees an analysis of NCEA achievement
 - gathering student voice to evaluate courses and inform changes to programmes, contexts and standards
 - encouraging students to register for their NZQA Learner login and check the accuracy of the data
- **reports accurate achievement data by:**
 - checking the accuracy of external entries to minimise late entries
 - withdrawing students appropriately so there are minimal internal entries without results
 - reporting results against the correct provider codes of outside providers with which the school holds current memoranda of understanding.

Investigate data patterns, particularly Not Achieved results There is a high rate of Not Achieved results in a number of subject areas in comparison with other schools. Most, but not all of these are in externally assessed standards. It is suggested that the school investigates the causes to determine the reasons, ensure entries are appropriate, and that students are given an adequate assessment opportunity.

For consideration

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

- investigate data patterns, particularly in externally assessed standards.

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))

Ruawai College has effective processes and procedures for:

- ensuring students receive outlines for all courses they undertake
- communicating assessment policy and procedure to staff.

Ruawai College assists common understanding of assessment practice by:

- informing teachers about assessment best practice and providing opportunities to discuss changes
- providing students with information about expectations and key processes.

Improved communication would help students to reach their academic goals

While students have academic goals, they are not sure of what exactly they need to achieve the qualification aimed for. It is suggested that they are reminded from time to time about the requirements by their Learning Advisors.

The school has identified that the current student NCEA handbook should be reviewed to ensure that it is current, reflects the practice in the school and is written in appropriate language for the intended audience. Students were issued with the handbook late in Term 2. The late issue was an oversight by the new Principal's Nominee. A revised handbook could be physical or digital as appropriate. The Principal's Nominee has been provided with a checklist of what could be included.

There is variation in the information in the course outlines about the assessment programmes in each course. In some outlines, it is not clear that some standards are optional. Dates are either unhelpfully vague or unfeasibly precise. The Principal's Nominee had identified this as an area for review and agrees that outlines should follow a standard format.

Easy access to information in appropriate language helps teachers, students and their parents to have a common understanding. Information about the assessment programme in each course helps students to plan effectively and better meet their academic goals.

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 and ensure that it is available for students near the start of the year.