

Managing National Assessment Report

Northcote College

August 2017

What this report is about

This report summarises NZQA's review of how effectively Northcote 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 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

Prior to the visit the school provided the following documents:

- information on their actions and self-review since the last Managing National Assessment report
- *Northcote College Board of Trustees Assessment Policy 2017*
- *Northcote College Teacher Guidelines – Managing National Assessment 2017* (Staff Handbook)
- *Northcote College Assessment Policy in Practice 2017* (Student Handbook)
- a sample of course outlines for Years 11, 12 and 13.

The School Relationship Manager met with the Principal's Nominee, four students, and Heads of Department for Commerce, Mathematics and Visual Arts and the acting Head of Department for Social Science.

There was a report-back session with the Principal, Deputy 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

Northcote College

18 August 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

Northcote College has a range of effective assessment and moderation processes in place for reporting credible results for national qualifications.

The Senior Leadership Team leads effective self-review and provides shared professional development opportunities for staff who co-construct their understanding of assessment and moderation processes and practice.

Differentiated courses and relevant contexts support student engagement, and students are mentored to choose appropriate assessment pathways to meet their needs.

The school reports to NZQA, only those results that have been subject to its internal moderation processes.

The external moderation process is part of an effective, embedded self-review cycle, including action plans and a Principal's Nominee audit of each department with follow-up visits where necessary. Teachers are supported by the Principal's Nominee to identify and implement any changes highlighted by this oversight that would strengthen internal moderation. Strategies include visits to external verifiers, peer supervision for teachers new to NCEA, working with professional associations, and attending relevant professional development.

Data is tracked effectively by teachers, Heads of Department and senior management. Comparative and longitudinal analysis of the NZQA examination results and internal assessment data through the school management system is used effectively in designing courses to meet student needs. Data is used to support students to set academic goals through use of credit summaries and evidence-based decision-making.

A range of communications systems help staff, students and their parents understand assessment pathways, the NCEA, and share a common understanding of school assessment policy and processes.

Areas for improvement

The school needs to facilitate teacher understanding of the purpose of internal moderation. By focusing verification on a purposefully selected sample of work at the

grade boundary it will help teachers better recognise the features that exemplify these grades.

Final consistency checks in departments should ensure that all aspects of the moderation process are complete, including teachers notifying verifiers if agreed grades have been changed by the external moderator.

The random selection process for external moderation must not be able to be predicted, as is possible with the school's current method. An alternative approach using a random selection function on the student management system was discussed and the school agreed to NZQA requirements are met.

Some updates to documentation will better align handbooks with assessment practice and strengthen staff understanding.

Agreed action

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

- reinforce the need for sufficient and purposeful selection of student work for verification as part of the internal moderation process
- update the random selection system to clarify the process and better meet NZQA's requirements
- update the staff handbook to clarify and strengthen staff understanding as outlined in the report.

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17 October 2017

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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, 3v)

Action Items from 15 August 2013 Managing National Assessment Report In 2013 it was agreed that the school would strengthen monitoring of internal moderation. This has been addressed through the introduction of a documented internal moderation audit visit by the Principal's Nominee to departments to check all internal moderation processes, and through updates to the staff handbook that detail this process.

The review report also required that the relevant provisions of the Privacy Act 1993 be added to both staff and student guides. This has been partially addressed. Provisions are embedded in the staff guide but need to be made more explicit and accessible. In addition, professional development will help ensure all staff understand and apply the requirements for student privacy during grade signoff.

When the staff and student guide are next updated to include clarification of privacy information it will be written Plain English to add clarity.

Response to external moderation outcomes The school has effective processes to respond to external moderation feedback. The high agreement rate between teachers and NZQA moderators reflects robust internal moderation processes in most departments. The Principal's Nominee reads all moderation reports, identifies any issues, and interviews Heads of Department and teachers to ensure an action plan is in place where issues are identified. Action plans are written up in consultation with the Principal's Nominee, who checks completion of these as part of her annual departmental moderation audit. Actions required include making changes to tasks or assessment schedules, providing peer supervision for new teachers and seeking appropriate professional development to ensure understanding of the standard.

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)

Northcote College has a culture of self-review of assessment practice. Effective self-review is led by the Senior Leadership Team around regular staff professional development and staff meetings, and through leadership setting a strategic direction. Recent review has focused on clarifying teacher understanding of moderation and assessment processes by:

- conducting staff professional development to co-construct and share assessment practice to ensure consistency, with a focus on understanding the purpose of internal moderation and to broaden staff understanding of Consent to Assess
- establishing a Teaching, Learning and Leadership Group to consider assessment outcomes, standards offered, course design and course endorsement

- setting and sharing schoolwide goals for all leavers to achieve NCEA Level 2
- reducing credits offered to provide quality assessment, allow students to be assessed when ready, and reduce student and staff workload
- identifying literacy and numeracy issues when students enter the college, which has led to a Community of Learning goal to overcome these barriers, as they impact on NCEA outcomes and those at risk of not achieving
- trialling digital evidence collection through a bring your own devices policy, with some evidence collection for NCEA Level 1 underway
- conducting a systematic review of breaches of assessment rules, led by the Deputy Principal, and making changes to processes for checking plagiarism and authenticity
- restructuring the annual departmental report to the Board of Trustees to include more accessible executive summary data and commentary on the analysis of student achievement data to support strategic direction.

These initiatives indicate that the school is developing a culture where teachers take ownership of NCEA practice and have reviewed policy and process to achieve agreed goals.

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

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

- differentiating and individualising assessment programmes by providing flexible timeframes, relevant contexts and clear pathways
- collecting assessment evidence in a variety of ways through verbal, visual, physical and project-based learning
- providing a range of vocationally-based assessment pathways to help students to complete their qualifications through Gateway and a range of external providers
- making applications for students who are identified as needing special assessment conditions, using school-based evidence.

Northcote College has effective processes and procedures for:

- ensuring that all students have a common Conditions of Assessment Template provided in advance of each assessment to manage consistent understanding of assessment submission requirements
- providing valid opportunities for resubmission and one further assessment opportunity
- managing a consistent schoolwide process for missed and late assessment, which requires approval by the Principal's Nominee
- monitoring the authenticity of student work submitted for assessment by using suitable strategies during the assessment and marking process
- providing a process for students to appeal assessment processes and decisions, and investigating these requests
- reporting a result of Not Achieved for proven breaches of authenticity and where students have had an adequate assessment opportunity but submitted no work.

Mentoring processes used effectively to identify student assessment needs

Students interviewed discussed effective mentoring and goalsetting by their vertical form class teachers, deans and parents. A range of interviews and year level meetings help them choose their assessment pathways. For those who may not gain NCEA certificates through conventional subjects, the school engages with a range of external providers in hospitality, cookery and carpentry to engage their interests and help meet students' career aspirations and pathways.

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 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)

Northcote College has effective processes and procedures for managing internal moderation by:

- ensuring all assessment materials are critiqued prior to use
- engaging with suitably-qualified subject specialists to verify a sample of marked student work
- documenting the internal moderation process, including noting verification discussion and agreed decisions on an *Internal Moderation Cover Sheet*
- monitoring completion of the internal moderation process through submission of *Internal Moderation Cover Sheets* to the Principal's Nominee and reconciling these with actual practice.

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

- ensuring samples of student work are available for external moderation submission by being adequately stored
- conducting annual documented Principal's Nominee's audits of internal and external moderation systems and processes in each department
- developing supported action plans with teachers where external moderation suggests this is required.

Clarify verification processes for internal moderation NZQA recommends there be a sufficient number of pieces of student work selected for grade verification to ensure the assessor is confident that the grades awarded are consistent with the standard. The number will depend on factors such as the experience of the teacher, previous external moderation history and student cohort. This review identified that, for two staff, there remains a misconception that eight pieces of student work only are to be internally moderated, and that internal moderation involves documenting agreed grades for a random sampling of student work.

The student work selected for verification should always be purposefully selected. This means selecting examples at a grade boundary as well as any grades that need review. Purposeful and sufficient selection has the potential to significantly reduce the workload of some teachers. The school agrees to clarify and reinforce these details with staff.

Record verification discussion and final grade The school encourages teachers to document verification discussion and record the final result as part of their internal moderation process. This is fully completed in most cases but needs to happen more consistently in one department so that it serves as a valuable reference for teachers in subsequent years.

Update random selection process for external moderation to meet NZQA requirements The school uses a manual random selection process for external moderation. In one case it was identified that this could be predicted. It now plans to

update this to use its student management system to meet NZQA requirements and better ensure there is no possibility that the selection can 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:

- reinforce sufficient and purposeful selection of student work for internal moderation
- update the random selection system to better meet NZQA's requirements.

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)

Northcote College effectively:

- **uses assessment-related data to support achievement outcomes for students by:**
 - tracking and monitoring student achievement to provide interventions for those at risk of not achieving their NCEA qualification
 - requiring Heads of Department to analyse academic achievement to inform changes to course and task design
 - conducting comparative and longitudinal analysis of national assessment results for the Senior Leadership Team, which identify barriers and enablers to achievement. These are reported to the Board of Trustees through annual reports
 - effectively supporting students to set academic goals, and to track their progress towards NCEA through their Learner login.
- **reports accurate achievement data by:**
 - submitting results to NZQA on a regular and timely basis so that errors can be identified and resolved before final results release
 - managing assessment results for Year 10 students appropriately
 - ensuring students sign off results prior to NZQA's deadline for reporting internal assessment results
 - checking the accuracy of external entries before the 1 September deadline
 - ensuring that entries are reported with a result or withdrawn, as appropriate
 - checking the use of correct provider codes where assessment is completed by external providers.

Effective analysis of internal/external data Professional development in data analysis has enabled staff to develop their understanding of internal/external results variability. They make comparisons to note trends or analyse variance between the outcomes for standards offered internally and those offered as externals. Staff are aware that there are many reasons for such variation, including assessment quality. In one department an investigation of this variation could be accounted for through good assessment practice outcome.

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, 2.7iib)

Northcote College has effective processes and procedures for:

- providing a detailed and accessible options booklet for students and their families to support them in making subject choices
- communicating assessment procedures to staff, students and their families through digital and print media and face-to-face meetings
- ensuring students receive standardised course outlines for all courses they undertake
- providing access to assessment results via the school management system
- providing information to families on fees, financial assistance and other aspects of NCEA through emails, newsletters and year level assemblies.

Northcote College assists common understanding of assessment practice by:

- informing teachers about assessment best practice and providing opportunities to discuss changes in regular staff and department meetings
- reconciling all Memoranda of Understanding against the codes of external providers
- knowing that students understand what they need to achieve in order to gain a qualification through surveying student understanding and listening to student voice.

Communications require updating as follows:

Several refinements to the staff handbook will add clarity and strengthen staff understanding of moderation and assessment practice.

The Principal's Nominee plans to update the staff handbook by:

- adding the words "purposeful selection" to the section on internal moderation verification to strengthen actual practice
- including explanation of a more robust system for random selection for external moderation
- changing the word "accreditation" to "Consent to Assess"
- referencing "school-based evidence" for special assessment conditions
- referring directly to the Privacy Act 1993 to add clarity to staff and student documentation.

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:

- update the staff handbook to clarify and strengthen staff understanding as outlined in the report.