

Managing National Assessment Report

Rutherford College

August 2017

What this report is about

This report summarises NZQA's review of how effectively Rutherford 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

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
- *Board of Trustees Assessment Policy, Rutherford College, 2017*
- *Assessment Policies, Practices and Key Forms, Rutherford College, 2017* (Staff Handbook)
- *Student Handbook, Rutherford College, 2017*
- a sample of course outlines for Years 11, 12 and 13.

The School Relationship Manager met with the Principal's Nominee, the Student Assessment Manager, three students, the Teacher in Charge of Classical Studies and Heads of Faculty for International Languages, Mathematics, Sciences, Social Sciences and Technology.

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.

SUMMARY

Rutherford College

3 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 four years.

What the school is doing well

Rutherford College is to be commended for the effective systems that have been established to both support student achievement towards a qualification as well as to ensure that the practices followed by teachers are consistent with NZQA requirements. The Principal's Nominee is experienced and effective in her role and is ably supported by the Student Assessment Manager.

The teachers interviewed for this review displayed a consistency of understanding and practice of NZQA requirements and a common ownership of the school's overall vision and strategic goals.

Self-review that is data-driven and evidence-based occurs. This was underlined in the recent ERO report. Heads of Faculty complete an annual report to senior leaders and the Board of Trustees following an analysis of student achievement in the previous year. This report informs decision-making about the setting of schoolwide goals including possible changes to courses. An annual faculty self-review has a particular focus on assessment and moderation procedures and is an example of good practice. This culture of self-review provides confidence to senior leaders that schoolwide practices are current and effective.

Courses are established and amended in response to the needs of students. Examples of this responsiveness includes the development of a number of Academy programmes and the school increasing the standards available for assessment by applying to extend their Consent to Assess. Many courses follow a differentiated learning programme with students only being assessed when they are ready. This approach reinforces the school's intent to meet the academic and qualification needs of students.

Students are well-supported and mentored following the ATOM programme (Achieve to our Maximum). Two additional mentors have been appointed under the Culturally Responsive and Relational Pedagogy programme to further support identified Māori and Pasifika students. Students at risk of not achieving a qualification are identified and effectively tracked.

Internal moderation occurs effectively within faculties and is monitored by the Principal's Nominee to provide assurance that results reported are credible. Any issues raised in external moderation reports are also followed up to ensure that the appropriate action is taken by the Head of Faculty.

School data is well-managed. Datafiles are submitted to NZQA in good time and any issues are effectively followed up.

Information about NCEA and NZQA processes are effectively communicated to staff, parents and students.

Areas for improvement

The practice of allowing *Further Evidence* to be submitted by students after the verification and distribution of grades as detailed in the staff handbook does not follow NZQA requirements and must cease. The staff handbook must be updated to reflect this.

The Principal's Nominee has begun to review and update the staff handbook with new procedures as a result of the introduction of a new student management system. These updates must be completed.

Agreed action

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

- cease the practice of accepting *Further Evidence* after the verification and distribution of grades
- complete the update of the staff handbook to reflect changes brought about by the introduction of a new student management system and to remove reference to the practice of accepting *Further Evidence*.

Kay Wilson
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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 October 2014 Managing National Assessment Report

There were no action items specified in this report.

Response to external moderation outcomes The school has an effective system in place to ensure that any action required as a result of external moderation feedback is undertaken.

The Principal's Nominee and Heads of Faculty analyse external moderation reports and, where issues are identified, an appropriate action plan is agreed and noted. The Principal's Nominee monitors that these agreed actions are completed by the relevant Head of Faculty.

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 2017 ERO report states that "college leaders use student achievement information very well to make positive changes to learners' engagement. Trends over time, and comparisons with local and national achievement inform school goals and targets, management decisions and long-term planning"

Evidence sighted in this review supports this viewpoint.

Self-review is well-established in the school, is evidence-based and is used to inform decision-making. Heads of Faculty prepare annual reports for senior leaders that reflect an analysis of the results achieved by students and a recommendation for any changes to courses and standards offered. These reports inform the decisions of senior leaders and the setting of school-wide goals.

Heads of Faculty also complete an annual self-review that is focussed on assessment and moderation processes undertaken in the faculty. This self-review is discussed with the Principal's Nominee who retains a copy. This is an effective process. It has the dual function of supporting self-reflection as well as being an attestation that the processes required by the school are being followed in each faculty.

These internal review processes support and inform the school's clear shared vision for student achievement which incorporates a number of key initiatives such as Devices for Learning, Culturally Responsive and Relational Pedagogy, Positive Behaviour for Learning, Community of Learning and Achieving to our Maximum (ATOM).

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)

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

- designing assessment programmes that are personalised and focussed on their interests, needs and abilities
- providing additional pathways through Academy programmes that include Mahi a Toi, Mechatronics and Hospitality
- providing differentiated assessment within courses
- extending the school's available standards through the submission of an application to NZQA, most recently for standards in Exercise Prescription
- assessing them when they are ready, where appropriate
- ensuring teachers are aware of individual students with special assessment conditions entitlements and providing these resources for internal assessment where appropriate.

Rutherford College has effective processes and procedures for:

- ensuring grades awarded are valid, authentic and verified
- monitoring the authenticity of student work submitted
- providing suitable opportunities for resubmissions and further assessment
- investigating appeals by students of assessment decisions
- managing missed and late assessments
- ensuring derived grades are based on pre-existing standard-specific authentic evidence that has been subject to a quality assurance process
- meeting the requirements of the Privacy Act 1993.

Mentoring system (ATOM) is well-developed Students benefit from an established mentoring system that has been well-refined.

ATOM (Achieving to our Maximum) uses tutor teachers as the main mentors for students with support from deans and senior leaders where appropriate. Updated student achievement data is available for mentors which is used to inform student goal-setting and the nature of the support provided. Students interviewed during this review confirmed that they valued the support they receive through ATOM and identified their tutor teacher as their primary source of support.

Mentoring is further supported through the Culturally Responsive and Relational Pedagogy programme. Under the auspices of this programme, two mentors have been appointed, one to support identified Māori students and the other to support identified Pasifika students. These mentors augment the role of the tutor teachers. Senior leaders hope that this additional support will improved outcomes for these students.

The practice of accepting *Further Evidence* must cease A practice, known as *Further Evidence* in the staff handbook, is being used by at least one of the teachers interviewed. According to this practice (aimed mainly at portfolio submissions) a teacher may accept evidence towards a grade “before or after verification and distribution of grades and feedback” and “before or after further teaching”.

This practice is contrary to NZQA rules and must cease. Extending opportunities for the provision of feedback and feedforward at various checkpoints may achieve a similar intention but fall within the rules.

Only the practices of Resubmission and Further Assessment Opportunity meet the requirements of NZQA. These processes are correctly detailed in the staff handbook and teachers interviewed understood these.

Agreed action

NZQA and senior management agree on the following action to improve the management of assessment for national qualifications. Senior management undertakes to:

- cease the practice of accepting *Further Evidence* after the verification and distribution of grades.

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)

Rutherford 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 purposefully selected sample of student work
- where appropriate, using verifiers from outside the school
- documenting the process using *internal moderation coversheets* and lodging a copy with the Principal's Nominee
- keeping benchmark exemplars to inform future assessment decisions
- monitoring the completion of internal moderation through an annual faculty self-review process and visits to faculties by the Principal's Nominee to physically check relevant documents and processes.

Rutherford College 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
- responding effectively to external moderation outcomes.

Teachers are generally following sound internal moderation procedures

Teachers interviewed during this review are following robust internal moderation procedures with samples being purposefully selected at grade boundaries (on the "cusp").

One anomaly is that eight samples of student work tends to be selected for verification purposes, although this can sometimes be more or less. The selection of eight samples seems to be a routine "default" position and is not mandated in the staff handbook.

The number of samples to be selected should rather be a sufficient number to ensure the assessor is confident that the grades awarded are consistent with the standard. This number will depend on factors such as the experience of the teacher, previous external moderation history and student cohort. This could be more or less than eight.

Senior leaders should consider clarifying for teachers what constitutes a sufficient sample of student work for verification purposes.

No action required

No issues with the school's internal and external moderation were identified during this review.

For consideration

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

- clarifying for teachers what constitutes a sufficient sample of student work for verification purposes.

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)

Rutherford College effectively:

- **uses assessment-related data to support achievement outcomes for students by:**
 - using NZQA statistical reports to analyse results comparatively and historically to inform decisions about future course content
 - using NCEA data to report annual results to senior leaders and Board of Trustees and focus on identified school targets
 - identifying and tracking priority learners, and those at risk of not achieving an NCEA qualification using data collated in SARONA (Students At Risk of Not Achieving).
- **reports accurate achievement data by:**
 - ensuring that datafiles are submitted to NZQA in a timely manner
 - checking reports such as the Key Indicators to identify and resolve any errors
 - using a “sign-off process” with students to confirm the accuracy of the internally assessed grades reported.

School is adapting to a new student management system The school has introduced a new student management system this year. Senior leaders are of the opinion that the tools available in this new system will further enhance data management and analysis. Although there have been understandable issues from time to time as the teachers and managers adapt, this change has generally been well-managed. The school is well-placed to benefit from the improvements inherent in this new system, including the ability for students and parents to track progress by using the parent and student portal.

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)

Rutherford College has effective processes and procedures for:

- ensuring all course assessment outlines and other materials use the same template to provide consistent information for students
- communicating assessment policy and procedures to staff, students and parents
- assisting students and parents to use the portal into the school's student management system to access NCEA achievement information
- ensuring a memorandum of understanding is held for all outside providers against whose codes grades are reported.

Rutherford College assists common understanding of assessment practice by:

- holding NCEA assemblies for students
- publishing a staff handbook and a student handbook containing assessment procedures
- maintaining comprehensive information on the school's website
- ensuring relevant NZQA updates are circulated to teachers and discussed as necessary
- informing teachers about assessment best practice and providing opportunities to discuss changes.

Staff handbook is being updated The introduction of a new student management system has required the staff handbook to be updated as the relevant references relate to the old system. The school has delayed making the handbook updates until they are confident in using the new system but this is now underway.

The handbook also needs to be updated to remove reference to the practice of accepting *Further Evidence* as discussed above.

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:

- complete the update of the staff handbook to reflect changes brought about by the introduction of a new student management system and to remove reference to the practice of accepting *Further Evidence*.