

Managing National Assessment Report

St Dominic's College

June 2017

What this report is about

This report summarises NZQA's review of how effectively St Dominic's 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
- *Assessment Policy, St Dominic's College, 2017*
- *Assessment Procedures, St Dominic's College, 2017* (Staff Handbook)
- *NQF Student Information, St Dominic's College, 2017* (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 Department for Dance, Drama, English, Physical Education and Health, Religious Education, and Technology.

There was a report-back session with the Acting 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

St Dominic's College

29 June 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

St Dominic's College displays a commitment to self-review that is established at all levels of the school. Data analysis informs self-review processes and underpins the decision-making process. Departments are expected to provide detailed achievement reports on an annual basis and a termly report on current issues and concerns. These reports inform the decisions of the senior leadership team. A recent extension to the student management system will further enhance achievement data analysis.

Students are encouraged and expected to monitor their own progress towards the achievement of a qualification. Weekly Strategic Planning sessions enable students to update their credit summaries. These summaries are used during sessions with Academic Coaches. The identification and tracking of students at risk of not achieving a qualification is developing.

The school has developed a number of procedures that help assure valid results. These include the requirement for students to sign an acknowledgement that the results they have received are accurate, and a central location for the receipt of all written assignments.

Internal moderation processes are robust and thorough. This, coupled with good external moderation results over a number of years, provides confidence in the assessment decisions made by teachers. Monitoring of internal moderation is undertaken by the Principal's Nominee.

Information on assessment practice and NCEA requirements is shared with students, staff and parents using a number of different media including handbooks, parents' evenings, year level assemblies and posters. Students interviewed felt well supported and confident in being able to access the information they needed.

Areas for improvement

The staff handbook correctly explains the process for further assessment opportunities. However, teachers interviewed held various interpretations about how this should be applied. Schoolwide clarity is needed.

Although the Principal's Nominee monitors the completion of internal moderation processes through the review of all internal moderation coversheets, monitoring should be strengthened so that senior leaders can be assured that all reported results are credible.

A number of internal standards are reported to NZQA each year with no results. This skews achievement data and a process must be developed to ensure that students are either withdrawn from an entry in a standard (if this is appropriate) or a result reported.

The review and update of the staff and student handbooks, begun after the previous MNA review, needs to be completed.

Agreed action

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

- clarifying a common understanding of further assessment opportunities with all teachers
- developing a system to ensure that all internal entries reported to NZQA have a result or are withdrawn in accordance with NZQA requirements
- updating incorrect or potentially misleading information in the staff and student handbooks, and including the procedure for monitoring internal moderation processes in the staff handbook
- strengthening the monitoring of internal moderation by senior leadership to ensure that they are confident that all reported results are credible.

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23 August 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 11 November 2014 Managing National Assessment Report

This report detailed three items to be actioned. These were to:

- implement an internal moderation monitoring process
- detail this monitoring process in assessment documents
- review and update staff and student communication to ensure consistency

An internal moderation monitoring process has been implemented but needs to be strengthened. Some progress has been made in updating staff and student handbooks. However, this is not complete. There remain a number of inaccurate or potentially confusing references that need to be corrected. The process for monitoring internal moderation must also be specified in the staff handbook.

Response to external moderation outcomes

The school has received good moderation reports in most subjects and has had a good moderation agreement rate for a number of years.

Where issues are identified in reports, these are followed up with the relevant Head of Department by the Principal's Nominee who further checks that identified actions have been implemented.

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)

Self review, informed by data analysis, is well established at all levels in the school. Annual reports to the Board of Trustees by Heads of Department are detailed and provide a thorough review of all courses offered in the previous year and any changes or plans to be implemented in the current year as a result of the review.

Heads of Department are also expected to report each term on progress being made with departmental goals and any issues of concern.

In the past year, a focus on addressing potential plagiarism has developed as a result of both informal and formal review processes. As a result, the senior leadership team has identified this issue as worthy of further attention with best practice being shared.

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)

St Dominic's College has effective processes and procedures for meeting the assessment needs of their students by:

- designing programmes of learning that are focussed on their interests, needs and abilities
- providing academic support and mentoring through Academic Coaches and meetings involving students and their parents which occur twice a year
- publishing an annual assessment calendar
- supporting those identified for special assessment conditions
- where appropriate, assessing students when they are ready.

St Dominic's College has effective processes and procedures for:

- submitting valid, authentic and verified grades
- monitoring the authenticity of student work submitted
- providing suitable opportunities for resubmissions
- investigating appeals by students of assessment decisions
- managing missed and late assessments
- ensuring evidence for derived grades
- meeting the requirements of the Privacy Act 1993.

The tracking of student achievement is developing The tracking of student achievement is developing with a "traffic light" system being introduced to enable the identification and follow up of students at risk of not achieving their qualification goals. This will enhance the ability of Academic Coaches to further support students.

Students are also strongly encouraged to track their own achievement and progress towards a qualification. This approach empowers students. Each week, time is allocated for Strategic Planning when students update a digital template of their internal results to both keep themselves informed and to provide the basis of ongoing discussion with their Academic Coach. The use of the Learner Login to the NZQA website to confirm results is also widespread.

Thorough processes assure valid results Any students' assignments for assessment in all subjects are handed in through a central process. These are logged by administrative staff before being uplifted by the teachers concerned. This process is effective in ensuring that deadlines are maintained and potential disagreements with teachers over late or missing assignments are minimised. Students also complete a sign off sheet confirming the results they have been awarded for internal assessments.

These processes are thorough and contribute to the assurance of valid results being reported to NZQA.

Teachers are responsive to students' assessment needs Teachers and students interviewed during the review confirmed that the school has developed a flexible approach to the course completion requirements as a response to the needs of students. In most courses in Years 12 and 13, students are able to negotiate with their teachers to not be assessed for specific internal standards.

Consideration should be given to review the overall assessment workload

Students currently complete six courses a year, each comprising eighteen or more credits. If students successfully complete all standards, this results in the achievement of significantly more credits than is required for a qualification. As acknowledged above, the school has a flexible approach that permits students to be assessed for fewer standards. However, workload for students and teachers could be reduced and the quality of results achieved potentially enhanced, if the overall credit offering was reduced. This is worthy of consideration by the school.

A schoolwide understanding of further assessment opportunities is required

Teachers expressed a variable understanding of the offering of further assessment opportunities to students. The Staff Handbook correctly explains this process but it is subject to interpretation by teachers. This should be clarified with all teachers to ensure a common understanding. The Mythbuster published by NZQA may prove useful.

Agreed action

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

- clarify a common understanding of further assessment opportunities with all teachers

For consideration

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

- reducing the overall credit offering 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)

St Dominic's 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
- documenting the process on *internal moderation coversheets* and lodging a copy with the Principal's Nominee
- the Principal's Nominee monitoring the completion of *internal moderation coversheets* and following up on any concerns that are evident
- keeping benchmark exemplars to inform future assessment decisions.

St Dominic's College has effective processes and procedures for managing external moderation by:

- the Principal's Nominee 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
- following up on external moderation feedback with Heads of Department including documenting agreed actions and ensuring that these actions are completed.

Internal moderation processes are robust and thorough The teachers interviewed showed a thorough understanding of the required processes and valued internal moderation as a means to both verify assessment judgements and for professional learning purposes.

Teachers use a variety of verification modes including purposeful sampling, the use of external verifiers as appropriate, panel marking or variations of these.

Consistently high agreement rates in external moderation confirms the school's thorough approach to verification and provides confidence to senior leaders of the validity of results submitted to NZQA.

One department verifies all student samples The Head of Department of one subject area confirmed that all student work was verified by other teachers. This means that all student work is effectively being marked twice. This has significant workload implications for the teachers concerned and the process far exceeds the sufficiency requirements of NZQA.

The school should consider clarifying the level of sufficiency required with this department.

The monitoring of internal moderation processes needs to be strengthened Senior leaders must develop a rigorous system to monitor that internal moderation

processes are being effectively completed in departments. This will provide confidence that all reported results are credible.

Currently, the Principal's Nominee monitors the completion of internal moderation processes by the collection of coversheets. She reviews the coversheets and follows up any concerns she notes with the teachers concerned.

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:

- strengthen the monitoring of internal moderation by senior leadership to ensure that they are confident that all reported results are credible.

For consideration

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

- clarifying with teachers what constitutes a sufficient sample of materials for verification for internal moderation.

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)

St Dominic's College effectively:

- **uses assessment-related data to support achievement outcomes for students by:**
 - accessing NZQA statistical reports to analyse results to track progress and to inform decision-making
 - using data to monitor and track student progress
 - evaluating the effectiveness of assessment programmes to ensure they allow students to meet their achievement goals and informing changes to standards offered
- **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
 - ensuring low levels of late external entries
 - reconciling reported results from external providers with memoranda of understanding on an annual basis
 - using a “sign-off process” with students to confirm the accuracy of the internally assessed grades reported.

New function attached to student management system will enhance analysis

Departments currently report to senior leadership and the Board of Trustees annually and termly. The school has recently accessed the Live Reporting function attached to the student management system. This enhances the ability of staff to analyse achievement data using a number of different filters. This initiative will further develop the ability of senior leaders, Academic Coaches and teachers to both analyse results and to track student achievement.

The development of a policy relating to digital assessment should be considered

The use of digital assessment tools is not currently widespread in the school. However, it could be timely for the senior leadership team to consider the development of a digital policy related to assessment. This policy could include the digital storage of materials for external moderation purposes and will prepare the school for future digital developments.

Internal standards should not be reported to NZQA with no result A number of standards were reported to NZQA with no result even though a “sign-off process” is used. This has the impact of skewing achievement data. The school must develop a system to ensure that only standards with a result are submitted to NZQA. Students who have not had an adequate opportunity to be assessed should have the standard withdrawn.

Agreed action

NZQA and senior management agree on the following action to improve the management and use of assessment-related data. Senior management undertakes to:

- develop a system to ensure that all internal entries reported to NZQA have a result or are withdrawn, in accordance with NZQA requirements.

For consideration

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

- developing a digital assessment policy

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)

St Dominic's College has effective processes and procedures for:

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

St Dominic's College assists common understanding of assessment practice by:

- holding NCEA information evenings for parents and NCEA assemblies for students
- publishing both a staff and student handbook containing assessment procedures
- displaying posters in classrooms detailing key NCEA practices
- 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.

NCEA information is effectively communicated using a variety of media

Students interviewed during this review felt supported and confident that they could easily access their own achievement information and information about school assessment processes involving NCEA.

NCEA assessment procedures used by the school to support assessment practice are communicated to staff, students and parents using a variety of media, ensuring it is accessible to all stakeholders.

Student and staff handbooks require review and further updating A start has been made on reviewing and updating both the staff handbook and the student handbook. However, both these publications contain some incorrect or potentially misleading information which needs to be updated, including:

- clarifying the credit requirements for the achievement of NCEA and qualification endorsements
- the availability of the awarding of National Certificates
- clarifying the difference between resubmission and further assessment opportunities
- the definition of a derived grade
- what constitutes an "agreed sample" of material for internal moderation processes
- detailing the random selection process used by the Principal's Nominee for selecting samples for external moderation purposes
- detailing the process for monitoring internal moderation in departments

- updating the circumstances for which students may qualify for special assessment conditions
- correcting the last date by when internal standards can be withdrawn to 1 December.

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 incorrect or potentially misleading information in the staff and student handbooks, and include the procedure for monitoring internal moderation processes in the staff handbook.