

Managing National Assessment Report

St Dominic's College

July 2021

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, 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 2021* (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, 2021*
- *Assessment Procedures, St Dominic's College, 2021* (Staff Handbook)
- *NQF Student Information, St Dominic's College, 2021* (Student Handbook)
- a sample of course outlines for Years 11, 12 and 13.

The School Relationship Manager met with:

- the Principal's Nominee
- Assistant Principal
- Head(s) of Department for:
 - English
 - Languages
 - Religious Education
 - Social Sciences
 - Science
 - Technology
- three students.

There was a report-back session with the Deputy Principal, Assistant 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 July 2021

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.

At the request of NZQA, and with the school's agreement, this review was rescheduled from 2020 as a result of Covid-19 restrictions.

What the school is doing well

St. Dominic's College continues to follow practices that meet NZQA requirements and provide confidence in the credibility of NCEA results submitted on behalf of students. The leadership provided by Senior Leaders and the Principal's Nominee is effective.

All items identified for action in the previous review have been addressed by the school.

Self-review is an embedded practice at all levels, is well understood by teachers and well led by Senior Leaders. The reflective approach taken by teachers with a focus on improving assessment outcomes for students means that assessment practices and course structures are under ongoing and dynamic review. A number of initiatives have been introduced as a result of self-review including the development of a Relationship Based Learning programme and increased use of digital assessment opportunities.

Assessment practices are consistently applied schoolwide. This includes the application of resubmission rules, the granting of extensions and the management of appeals. The increasing use of digital assessment tools has the added advantage of strengthening the monitoring of students' work for possible authenticity breaches.

Both internal and external moderation processes and practices are sound. Of particular note is the role that line managers play in monitoring that these processes are occurring according to expectations in departments and to ensure that any actions decided upon as a result of concerns raised in moderation reports are completed. The Principal's Nominee's overall supervisory role is also effective.

The school has appropriate systems to manage data. Data files are submitted in a timely manner and any issues are addressed. The analysis of data to inform decision-making is a well-established practice.

The school publishes information about NCEA and expected practice to teachers, students and parents. Information is regularly reviewed for accuracy and teachers are updated about any changes in requirements. Students interviewed were

confident that they could access the information they needed to make appropriate assessment and pathway decisions.

There are no agreed action items. Some next steps for the school to consider are detailed in the body of the report. These include

- reviewing SAC applications to ensure that the assessment needs of all students are being met
- considering ways to encourage students to include STEM subjects in their course selections
- devolving to Heads of Department the responsibilities for preparing moderation materials in the online moderation application and for retrieving moderation reports
- further developing their digital assessment policy
- encouraging and supporting students to register and use an NZQA learner login
- reviewing their processes for preparing and submitting Unexpected Event Grades.



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12 November 2021

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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 29 June 2017 Managing National Assessment Report This report detailed four items to be addressed and all have been actioned. These were to:

- clarify a common understanding of further assessment opportunities with all teachers
- develop a system to ensure that all internal entries reported to NZQA have a result or are withdrawn in accordance with NZQA requirements
- update information in the staff and student handbooks, and include the procedure for monitoring internal moderation processes in the staff handbook
- strengthen the monitoring of internal moderation by senior leadership to ensure that they are confident that all reported results are credible.

Response to external moderation outcomes The school has developed effective processes to ensure that appropriate action is taken by Heads of Department in response to any issues raised in moderation reports and to monitor the completion of any actions taken as a result of these concerns.

Heads of Department are expected to review moderation reports and to discuss any matters raised with the Senior Leader who acts as their line manager. This Senior Leader also takes responsibility for ensuring that any actions to be taken are completed.

It must be noted that the school has a commendably high rate of consistency between teacher assessor judgments and those of moderators as reflected in annual moderation outcomes. This provides confidence in the school's internal moderation processes.

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)

Robust review, based on the analysis of data, continues to be an embedded practice and occurs at every level. The departmental annual review, submitted to Senior Leaders and the Board of Trustees, is the core element of this process but self-review is ongoing and dynamic.

The process is well understood across the school and is well led by Senior Leaders. Teachers are reflective and integrate these reflective approaches into their regular practices. A focus of this reflection is the improvement in assessment outcomes for students. Courses are amended as a consequence.

Student voice is gathered and forms part of the overall self-review process.

These ongoing schoolwide and integrated self-review approaches set the school up well to address the challenges that the upcoming NCEA changes will bring.

Initiatives introduced as a result of review include

- developing a Relationship Based Learning programme following the ideas of Russell Bishop
- reviewing the Academic Coaching model to ensure that it is fit for purpose
- refocussing the programmes offered in the Technology department to better meet the needs of students and to upskill teachers
- increasing the availability of digital assessment opportunities.

No action required

No issues with the school's response to NZQA external reviews 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 2021 5.1 – 5.7)

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
- offering varied opportunities for the collection of evidence towards assessment
- where appropriate, assessing students when they are ready
- extending assessment opportunities by offering vocational courses
- providing support through subject tutorials.

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

- ensuring grades awarded are valid, authentic and verified
- providing one further opportunity for assessment when appropriate
- providing suitable opportunities for resubmissions
- investigating appeals by students of assessment decisions
- using a range of strategies to ensure that student work is authentic
- reporting Not Achieved for proven breaches of authenticity and where students have had an adequate assessment opportunity but submitted no work
- meeting the requirements of the Privacy Act 2020.

Academic coaching is well-developed The school has an effective and well understood process to both track and identify those students at risk of not achieving their assessment goals and to provide academic coaching to support them. Consistently good qualification results are testament to the effectiveness of this process. Ways to improve the engagement with parents is currently under review

Increasing use of digital assessment notable Digital assessment opportunities are increasing with fewer paper assessments being handed in through the centralised reception process. This is a positive development and should be further encouraged.

Students interviewed valued the use of digital assessment tools and favoured their expanded use. Google Classroom and Turnitin platforms further assist the monitoring of authenticity. Teacher and student familiarisation with digital assessment also provides a solid foundation for the imminent move to more widespread digital external assessment.

Increasing use of digital assessment tools does create a number of challenges which are discussed in the Data section of this report.

Special Assessment Conditions (SAC) applications should be reviewed The categories of SAC entitlements being applied for should be reviewed to ensure that

the assessment needs of all students are being met.

Although the school continues to submit a good number of SAC applications, the number of computer only notifications has increased and the number of applications requesting a reader has decreased proportionately. This raises the question of why the number of students with reading difficulties has apparently declined. This situation may be appropriate but a review is suggested.

Further initiatives to encourage Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) uptake should be considered The school acknowledges that the number of students who take one or more STEM subjects is below optimum. A number of initiatives have been introduced to encourage more students into these subjects including Careers Expos and university visit days.

Given the well-documented value that inclusion of these subjects can have on future pathway options for students, the school should continue to find ways to encourage students to include these subjects in their course selections. This could include a review of the composition of standards included in some current courses or the development of new courses.

No action required

No issues with the school's management of assessment for national qualifications were identified during this review.

For consideration

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

- reviewing SAC applications to ensure that the assessment needs of all students are being met.
- ways to encourage students to include STEM subjects in their course selections

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 2021 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
- selecting borderline samples of student work for verification purposes
- using subject specialists to verify the selected samples
- where appropriate, using verifiers from outside the school
- documenting the process on *Internal Moderation Coversheets* and lodging a copy of each coversheet with the Principal's Nominee
- keeping benchmark exemplars to inform future assessment decisions
- ensuring standards owned by Industry Training Organisations are treated in the same manner as NZQA owned standards.

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

- randomly selecting samples of student work for external moderation to NZQA requirements
- ensuring samples of student work are stored so that they can be provided for external moderation
- responding effectively to external moderation outcomes.

Monitoring processes are effective The school has integrated the monitoring of both internal and external moderation into the existing line manager responsibilities and this has developed into an effective process. This provides confidence to Senior Leaders that robust moderation is occurring and assurance that results submitted to NZQA are credible.

Each Senior Leader acts as line manager for a Head of Department. Part of their responsibility is to monitor that moderation processes are being undertaken according to the school's expectations. In addition, they ensure that action plans are developed (if needed) in response to the outcomes of external moderation and then monitor the completion of these plans.

In addition, the Principal's Nominee works directly with Heads of Department to ensure that the schoolwide expectations are met. Heads of Department complete an annual attestation that they are following required moderation procedures and this is reviewed by the Principal's Nominee.

Consider devolving more responsibilities to Heads of Department The school should consider devolving to Heads of Department the responsibilities for preparing moderation materials in the online moderation application and for retrieving moderation reports when these are available online.

The Principal's Nominee currently prepares these materials for all departments and distributes moderation reports. Although undertaking this herself has been helpful to the Principal's Nominee to fully understand the process, devolving more responsibility to Heads of Department will both decrease the Principal's Nominee's workload and increase the agency of Heads of Department.

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:

- devolving to Heads of Department the responsibilities for preparing moderation materials in the online moderation application and for retrieving moderation reports.

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)

St Dominic's College effectively uses assessment-related data to support achievement outcomes for students by:

- monitoring academic student progress to identify learners at risk of not achieving their assessment goals
- evaluating the effectiveness of assessment programmes to ensure they allow students to meet their achievement goals and informing changes to standards offered
- gathering student voice to evaluate courses, inform changes to programmes, contexts and standards
- annually report to the Principal and Board of Trustees an analysis of NCEA achievement, to inform strategic goals and actions

St Dominic's College reports accurate achievement data by:

- using a “sign-off process” with students to confirm the accuracy of the internally assessed grades reported
- ensuring that datafiles are submitted to NZQA in a timely manner
- checking reports such as the Key Indicators to identify and resolve any errors
- reporting results against the correct provider codes of outside providers with which the school holds current Memoranda of Understanding.

Development of a digital storage policy should be considered The school should consider further developing their digital assessment policy in light of the increasing uptake of digital assessment and to be well-prepared for future changes.

As noted elsewhere in this review, departments are making increasing use of digital tools and digital assessment opportunities which is a positive development. It is timely to consider whether a schoolwide digital assessment policy would better support this development rather than leaving each department to establish their own procedures.

Also, as participation in digital exams increases and as more moderation samples are also submitted digitally, ensuring that the school's IT infrastructure can manage the requirements is crucial as is the secure storage of digital assessment and moderation materials.

Encourage students to register for an NZQA Learner Login The school should consider how to encourage and support as many students as possible to register for and use an NZQA login.

The percentage of students with an NZQA login has decreased in recent years. Students require login access to confirm results and qualifications, submit requests for reconsideration and reviews, and order certificates. In addition, current registration is essential if a student is to engage in a digital exam.

Review the submission process for Unexpected Event Grades The school should consider reviewing their processes for preparing and submitting Unexpected

Event Grades. These were not submitted in a number of standards in 2020. Although there may be legitimate reasons for these omissions, a review to determine whether this is the case is suggested.

Unexpected Event Grades can be used to award a result in external standards for students should a significant event occur during the exam period that interrupts the normal assessment process. These grades should be submitted to NZQA in a datafile prior to the start of the end of year examinations.

The absence of these reported grades for some standards and students means that this option may not be available for students if a significant event occurs.

No action required

No issues with the school's management and use of assessment-related data were identified during this review.

For consideration

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

- further developing their digital assessment policy
- encouraging and support students to register and use an NZQA learner login
- reviewing their processes for preparing and submitting Unexpected Event Grades.

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))

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

- ensuring students receive outlines for all course they undertake
- communicating assessment policy and procedure to teachers, students and parents
- inducting new staff to familiarise them with school assessment and moderation processes and expectations
- reviewing communications to ensure they are fit for purpose and current.

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

- informing teachers about assessment best practice and providing opportunities to discuss changes
- publishing a staff handbook and a student handbook containing assessment procedures
- holding student assemblies to inform them of school assessment policies and procedures.

No action required

No issues with the way in which the school maintained the currency of assessment policy and procedures, and communicated them to staff, students and families were identified during this review.