

Managing National Assessment Report

Western Springs College

June 2018

What this report is about

This report summarises NZQA's review of how effectively Western Springs 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
- *NCEA Assessment Handbook for Students, Whānau and Staff, Western Springs College, 2018*
- *Policies on Assessment, Curriculum, Teaching and Learning, and Learning Support, Western Springs College*
- a sample of course outlines published online for Years 11, 12 and 13.

The School Relationship Manager met with the Principal's Nominee, three students and Heads of Department or Teachers in Charge of English, Geography, Philosophy, Physical Education, Science and Technology.

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

Western Springs College

7 June 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 issues. Therefore, it is anticipated that the next Managing National Assessment review will be conducted within four years.

What the school is doing well

Western Springs College has actioned all the recommendations following the previous Managing National Assessment review. All assessment-related matters are ably managed by the Principal's Nominee who, although recently appointed to this role at the school, is a well-experienced senior leader who held this position at a previous school.

Self-review is an embedded practice at the school and occurs at every level. This ongoing scrutiny coupled with a commitment to improvement is a particular strength of the school and is underpinned by data analysis. These processes do not operate in isolation. Individual teacher self-review informs departmental review and this occurs onwards, up to Board of Trustees level. A series of regular meetings reinforce self-review processes and also encourages the sharing of best practice.

A number of initiatives have been introduced as a result of self-review including the move to a more dynamic "living" Annual Report that is prepared as an ongoing response to student achievement. Credit totals have also been capped at eighteen per course at Level 1 in response to workload concerns and possible related stress.

Assessment programmes are innovative and engaging, and are designed in response to the qualification needs of students. Teachers are consistent in their understanding and application of assessment rules such as the offering of resubmissions or further assessment opportunities.

The provision of personalised learning opportunities for students is a feature of the school although most students opt to take subjects drawn from the University Entrance approved subject list. Students can start an NCEA programme at Year 10 thus enabling a more flexible programme in Year 13 including university papers. Students opting for vocational or similar programmes are well-supported by an active Careers Department and Gateway programme.

Students are very well supported to attain their assessment goals. Regular meetings to identify students at risk of not achieving these goals and to plan support programmes are held. The Māori co-ordinator, Pasifika co-ordinator, accelerated co-ordinator and an Academic Monitoring Committee reinforce these processes. Students can receive academic support from the Learning Centre and the Homework Centres.

Teachers complete internal and external moderation processes in accordance with the requirements of NZQA. Best practice is shared.

Student achievement data is well-managed and effectively used to both track student progress and to inform self-review processes. Data files are submitted to NZQA in a timely manner and any errors or concerns are identified and efficiently addressed by the Principal's Nominee.

The school publishes comprehensive information about assessment rules and requirements, both on their website and in a handbook that is accessible to teachers, students and parents. NCEA information evenings are held for parents and assemblies for students. Students are provided with comprehensive information about each of their courses.

Areas for improvement

Some departments may be verifying more samples of student work than is necessary to meet the requirements of NZQA. This could be a workload issue for these teachers and the school should consider clarifying a more strategic approach to the selection of student work for verification purposes.

The Principal's Nominee currently requires Heads of Department to provide an action plan in response to any concerns raised in external moderation reports. However, there is no current formal process to follow up that these actions have been completed and achieved the desired outcomes. A monitoring process must be introduced.

Agreed action

The school agreed that an action will improve the quality of their assessment systems. This is to:

- monitor the completion of action plans developed as a result of concerns raised in external moderation reports.

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24 July 2018

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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 27 March 2015 Managing National Assessment Report This report detailed six items to be actioned. These were to:

- ensure teachers complete the *Internal Moderation Cover Sheet* so that it serves as a record that they have engaged in professional discussions on assessment materials, including for a proportion of grade judgements
- refine and improve its procedure to monitor the completion of internal moderation
- send to NZQA only those results for which the school has evidence of robust internal moderation
- ensure the selection of samples of student work for external moderation is undertaken as the final step in the process
- encourage teachers to digitally submit materials for external moderation
- update the *2015 NCEA Assessment Handbook for Students, Parents and Staff*, including the section about internal moderation.

These action items all related to issues involving either internal moderation or external moderation. These were thoroughly investigated during the interviews held during this review and it can be confirmed that all of these items have been actioned by the school.

Response to external moderation outcomes The Principal's Nominee reviews moderation reports and discusses with Heads of Department any concerns that have been raised and what actions are to be taken as a result. Appropriate action plans are then prepared. This is good practice.

However, the completion of these action plans is not subsequently monitored by the Principal's Nominee. To ensure that senior management can be confident that issues raised in moderation reports are appropriately actioned, a monitoring process must be introduced.

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)

Self-review is an embedded practice at the school and is integral to the ongoing teaching and learning programme and to students' achievement in qualifications. Teachers participate in ongoing personal self-review cycles which then inform the review that occurs in departments. This meshing of the self-review process is evident through middle and senior management levels and to the Board of Trustees. Data analysis is used to inform these processes.

A regular series of meetings involving teachers, Heads of Department, Heads of House, Senior Leaders and the Board of Trustees underpins the self-review process and also enables the effective sharing of good practice and the ongoing support of student achievement.

Senior leaders can be confident that any concerns relating to assessment practices will be identified and addressed as a result of these thorough processes.

Self-review has resulted in a number of developments at the school, including:

- the establishment of a co-governance structure between the school and Nga Puna o Wairorea, the onsite kura. This has both raised the profile of Māori achieving as Māori and placed these priority learners at the heart of decision-making at all levels. The very good achievement of Māori students is evidence of the impact of this approach
- the changes being introduced to the departmental Annual Report from a static yearly report to a more dynamic “living” document which is prepared throughout the year as the teaching and assessment programme is completed
- the reduction to 18 of the total credits assessed within each course at Level 1. This is in response to student and staff workload concerns and associated stress
- consideration of the teaching and assessment opportunities and challenges that will present themselves in the new physical space following the completion of the extensive school rebuild
- the re-allocation of the portfolios of senior leaders in response to concerns about succession planning. This has resulted in the Principal Nominee’s position being re-allocated this year.

Agreed action

NZQA and senior management agree on the following action to improve the school’s response to external review. Senior management undertakes to:

- monitor the completion of action plans developed as a result of concerns raised in external moderation reports.

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)

Western Springs 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 including digital submission
- where appropriate, assessing students when they are ready
- offering academic support for students after school hours through Homework Centres and a Learning Centre
- ensuring teachers are aware of individual students with special assessment conditions entitlements and providing these resources for internal assessment where appropriate
- providing multi-level courses
- negotiating with them the standards to be undertaken in their assessment programme.

Western Springs 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
- ensuring appropriate evidence for derived grades are held
- reporting Not Achieved for proven breaches of authenticity and where students have had an adequate assessment opportunity but submitted no work
- managing missed and late assessment processes
- meeting the requirements of the *Privacy Act 1993*.

Support for student achievement is a priority and is well-co-ordinated The provision of effective support for students to achieve their qualification goals is a feature of the school.

Student achievement in general and the identification of students at risk of not achieving their academic goals in particular, are key components of regular meetings held between form teachers, heads of house and senior leaders. Action plans to support students are developed and enacted.

This support for students is further enhanced by the involvement of the Māori co-ordinator, the Pasifika co-ordinator and the accelerated co-ordinator who hold special responsibility for these groups of students. In addition, an Academic Monitoring Committee, consisting of senior leaders and Board of Trustee members meet

regularly to review schoolwide achievement.

Personalised learning co-exists well within a more traditional structure The school has successfully blended a culture of personalised learning with a fairly traditional offering of subjects which are mainly drawn from the University Entrance approved subject list.

There are very few vocational or otherwise “non-traditional” courses. However, the Careers Department is very active in their support of students and the Gateway programme is popular. The relatively few students who seek vocational opportunities are accommodated.

Personalised learning is further extended by many students beginning an NCEA programme in Year 10. This does not result in students leaving school at the end of Year 12, but rather being able to have a more focussed programme in Year 13 which often includes one or more university papers.

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 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)

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

- ensuring all assessment materials are critiqued prior to use
- using subject specialists within and outside the school to verify a purposefully selected sample of student work
- documenting the process on *Internal Moderation Coversheets* and saving these and student work digitally or physically
- keeping benchmark exemplars to inform future assessment decisions
- monitoring the completion of the process.

Western Springs 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 and accessible to the Principal's Nominee
- submitting a high proportion of student work to NZQA digitally
- responding to external moderation outcomes.

Focus on reducing workload by considering verification requirements for sufficiency Teachers assure the quality of grades awarded by including work at grade boundaries when verifying assessor judgements. However, some departments verify more samples of student work than this. 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, or predetermined, 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.

No action required

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

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)

Western Springs College effectively:

- **uses assessment-related data to support achievement outcomes for students by:**
 - evaluating the effectiveness of assessment programmes to ensure they allow students to meet their achievement goals and informing changes to standards offered
 - encouraging professional learning enquiries around understanding of assessment and improving student achievement
 - tracking student achievement to identify students at risk of not achieving their chosen assessment pathway.
- **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 and internal entries with no results
 - reporting results against the correct provider codes of outside providers with which the school holds current memoranda of understanding
 - supporting students to use their NZQA Learner login to track their NCEA progress and identify errors in entries and results
 - submitting fees paid and financial assistance applications on time.

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 for school communication promoting understanding of assessment. (CAAS Guidelines 2.4i(f), 2.4v, 2.6vii, 2.7ii(b))

Western Springs College has effective processes and procedures for:

- ensuring students receive comprehensive outlines for all courses they undertake
- communicating assessment policy and procedures to teachers, students and parents
- supporting new teachers to the school to understand school assessment policy and procedures
- reviewing communications to ensure they are fit for purpose and current.

Western Springs College assists common understanding of assessment practice by:

- holding NCEA information evenings for parents and NCEA assemblies for students
- publishing an assessment handbook containing assessment procedures
- maintaining current information about NCEA on the school's website
- informing staff of updates to NCEA information throughout the year.

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.