



NEW ZEALAND QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY
MANA TOHU MĀTAURANGA O AOTEAROA

Managing National Assessment

School Assessment Systems

2006

Corran School

0060 Corran School

MNA visit date 13 September 2006

Report on Managing National Assessment School Assessment Systems 2006

Corran School

The purpose of Managing National Assessment (MNA) is to achieve valid, fair, accurate and consistent internal assessment in schools. It is a partnership between schools and the Qualifications Authority and has two components:

- a visit to check and report on the school's assessment systems at least once every three years
- the annual external moderation of assessment materials and assessor decisions of internally assessed standards across all curriculum areas.

This report summarises the findings of the assessment check carried out by an NZQA School Relationship Manager (SRM) on 13 September 2006. The SRM met with the Principal's Nominee to review progress since the last visit on 18 May 2004 and to appraise the school's assessment policies and procedures against the *Assessment and Certification Rules and Procedures for Secondary Schools*, the *Quality Assurance Standard for Accreditation of Secondary Schools* and national practice.

The SRM also met with Heads of Department (HODs) or Teachers in Charge (TICs) of ESOL, Music and Technology to check that the school's policies and procedures are consistently and effectively applied. There was a report-back session with the Principal and the Principal's Nominee at the end of the visit to highlight strengths and weaknesses, with suggested strategies for good practice.

This and previous MNA reports will be used in combination with the Education Review Office Report in the reconfirmation of the school's accreditation.

School Policies and Procedures

2004 Managing National Assessment Report

Evidence was sought that requirements, recommendations and suggestions in the previous MNA report have been addressed.

The Principal's Nominee reported that the majority of requirements, recommendations and suggestions from the previous MNA report have been addressed. In the report-back session discussion focused on assessment opportunities. In the light of national practice, this policy needs to be revisited and this report discusses further action that will assist the school in addressing this. Reference to NZQA as the final point of appeal still needs to be removed from student documentation.

Review of Policy and Procedures

Evidence was sought that school-wide assessment policies and procedures have been reviewed and are in line with national practice.

The school's assessment procedures documents were revised at the beginning of 2006. The Principal's Nominee has been at Corran School for three months. During this time there has been a full curriculum review and the decision made to reduce the number of courses assessing standards from the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). The Principal's Nominee indicated that before the end of the year he would be meeting with the Principal to discuss the review of 2006 assessment policies and procedures. After this the Principal's Nominee will work with teachers assessing NQF standards and plans to standardise the assessment documentation. The Principal's Nominee advised that the revised documents would state the review cycle and include the current version date.

National Qualifications Framework: Students and parents are informed about the NQF through the *National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) Student Handbook* provided at the beginning of the year or on enrolment during the year. The reference to NCEA should be removed in future revisions of documentation because the policies should include, not imply exclusion of, all NQF qualifications outside of NCEA. Aspects of assessment for national qualifications were discussed at the subject selection evening held in term three and the previous Principal's Nominee also spoke to all senior classes. School newsletters include information about the NQF and students are further informed about assessment procedures in class.

Course outlines and assessment statements: Course outlines distributed to students at the start of the year contain information about the standards to be assessed, credit values and completion dates or deadlines where appropriate. A template is available for teachers but two of the teachers interviewed produced course outlines that did not show the registered NQF numbers and versions of standards. These should be included.

Missed and late assessments: When the procedures document is next reviewed consideration should be given combining the sections on absence, lateness and extensions into one section. Some schools have rationalised their policies to a single section about 'Missed or Late Assessments'. They include the following elements: if a student is going to miss a deadline, they apply for an extension; if they are unable to attend on the day of an assessment due to illness, bereavement or family trauma they are provided, where possible, with an opportunity to complete the assessment upon their return to school or teachers may be able to use existing evidence to award a grade. Students absent from an internal assessment or who wish to apply for an extension are required to provide a medical certificate and complete an application form available in the student handbook. This is good practice as it provides students with clear procedures and streamlines documentation.

The reference to "compassionate consideration" used in school documentation relating to internal assessment should be removed, as the missed assessments policy will cover all circumstances that prevent students from meeting deadlines for internal assessments. The term "compassionate consideration" should only refer to the Qualifications Authority process for external assessment.

Compassionate consideration for external assessments: Staff documentation should make reference to teachers keeping records of students' progress towards externally assessed standards. These records should be kept on the school database and will provide the evidence required should a student need to apply for compassionate consideration at the end of the year.

Opportunities to demonstrate achievement: Further assessment opportunities are provided to students where practicable and manageable. National practice in a range of learning areas is increasingly moving towards an assessment for better learning approach. Teachers should be encouraged to explore a range of strategies to enable the recognition of a student's best effort, whether they have achieved at the first opportunity or not. If a student misses an assessment for an approved reason or it is impractical to offer another assessment opportunity, teachers can use evidence already collected. It would further encourage good practice to include the examples of strategies for recognising achievement listed in *NCEA Update 21* (July 04) as guidelines for teachers.

Authenticity: It would be useful to include strategies for dealing with authenticity issues in staff documentation. It is suggested that departments decide on a common approach to referencing sources and presenting bibliographies so that students have the learning of these conventions reinforced in all their courses.

Breaches of the rules: The staff documentation refers to "misconduct" and "the failure of students to comply with assessment conditions and behave appropriately". It would be helpful for teachers if all assessment misconduct eventualities are included in the policy. When next reviewing the policy it is suggested that 'Breaches of the Rules' be used, as this term would cover collusion, plagiarism and hindering others, and the penalties associated with these can be clearly indicated. Staff documentation makes reference to "if misconduct is proven students will not achieve the standard". This should not be a penalty but instead no grade should be awarded. Student documentation correctly states that no grade will be given when cases of assessment misconduct have been proven.

Appeal process: The process for students to appeal grades is clearly described in the school documentation. An application form is available if an appeal should go beyond student and teacher interaction. Staff documentation also applies the appeals process to breaches of the assessment rules but this information is not provided to students. Students should also be able to appeal decisions made about missed assessments. As required in the previous report the reference to NZQA being the last point of appeal should be removed from student documentation, as final decisions about internal assessment rest with the school.

Special assessment conditions: The Principal's Nominee reported that students requiring special assessment conditions are identified on enrolment or by classroom teachers and a register of students requiring support is kept. Provision is made for these students to have valid and fair assessment conditions consistent with the assistance they would normally receive as part of their learning environment. Information about this process is included in student documentation. The need for a recent professional assessment of students within two years of assessment for national qualifications should be included in documentation to ensure eligibility.

Privacy Act: School documentation makes it clear that the recording and release of student results are covered by the Privacy Act 1993. The use of student work as exemplars for students in subsequent years also complies with the Privacy Act 1993.

Quality Assurance Processes

Evidence was sought that systems are in place to ensure that:

- *internal moderation is taking place*
- *departments are linking externally to maintain a current understanding of the national standard*
- *concerns raised by external moderation are dealt with.*

Faculty Heads are responsible for the organisation of internal moderation within their departments. Information to assist them in this process has been included in the staff handbook. It was discussed with the PN that the use of the *Internal Moderation Summary Folder* form provides a record of the key steps for internal moderation and teachers interviewed were able to produce evidence that this form is being used to good effect. Continued monitoring of this system assures senior management that quality assurance processes are in place. It also provides a mechanism for collating all relevant assessment materials to ensure that they are considered for review.

The procedures document requires departments to have an appropriate written code of practice for internal moderation and includes some facets of internal moderation. It would be useful to include all facets in school documentation. Namely that:

- all materials, whether sourced commercially, downloaded from websites or developed by teachers, must be critiqued prior to use to ensure consistency with the registered standard and appropriateness of language, content and context for the local students
- there should be consistency of assessment across classes, as appropriate and from year to year, to which end benchmark samples should be kept, which can then also be available to send for external moderation
- samples of all assessor judgements should be verified for accuracy and consistency
- all assessment materials must be reviewed prior to further use
- feedback from external moderation appropriate to specific standards needs to be addressed as required
- documentation should be maintained as evidence that internal moderation has taken place and to assist with professional memory, continuity and monitoring by senior management.

Underpinning these steps is the need for teachers to engage with the wider professional community to maintain their knowledge of national standards. The teachers interviewed have established valuable external links with advisors, cluster groups and informally with colleagues or through subject associations. These contacts are especially important for sole teacher departments.

External moderation follow-up: Any concerns identified in external moderation reports have been followed up and teachers are required to write a report for the Principal's Nominee. It was discussed with the Principal's Nominee that the use of the *Response to External Moderation* form will assist teachers with this process and that this be included in departments' annual reports.

Quality Management Systems status: The Principal's Nominee indicated that he is working towards updating the school's quality management systems documentation to meet the requirements of the *Quality Assurance Standard for Accreditation of Secondary Schools*. Completing this is a prerequisite to submitting any future applications for extension of accreditation.

Administration

Evidence was sought of suitable systems and procedures for the management of assessment related data.

Student results are entered into the school database as assessment is complete. All files are backed up regularly and departments are also required to keep records. Students are required to verify their grades before the end of the year and teachers also verify printed copies of student results before the data is reported to NZQA. The school encourages students to use the *Learner Login* facility on the NZQA website. This provides students with another opportunity to check the accuracy of their entries and also enables them to access their internally assessed results online.

The Principal's Nominee is aware of the school's obligation with regard to accreditation and monitors this and other aspects of entries through the *Key Indicator Checklist* on the NZQA website. The Principal's Nominee reported that the Qualifications Manager has responsibility for checking the accuracy of external entries and internal results. It was discussed with the Principal's Nominee that teachers assessing standards from the NQF should also be encouraged to check the *Key Indicator Checklist* after each file submission.

Teachers interviewed indicated that they are analysing results data, but it is suggested that senior management provide a template that includes the questions from *NCEA Update 16*. This will assist departments in analysing results data in more detail particularly when reviewing teaching programmes. School-wide results data is analysed and a report provided annually to the Board of Trustees.

Action Items

The number and nature of action items below do not indicate a lessening of standards within the school, but rather advocate greater refinement of policy and practice.

In order to comply with the *Assessment and Certification Rules and Procedures for Secondary Schools* and the *Quality Assurance Standard for Accreditation of Secondary Schools*, the school must:

- include the registered NQF numbers and versions of standards in course outlines
- remove the term “compassionate consideration” in relation to internal assessment from school documentation
- require teachers to keep records of students’ progress towards externally assessed standards to assist with compassionate consideration applications
- include in school documentation strategies for recognising evidence of achievement
- amend the statement referring to “not achieved” for proven assessment misconduct to “no grade will be given”
- broaden its appeals procedure to apply to decisions relating to missed assessments
- include all information relating to appeals in student handbook
- remove reference to NZQA as the final point of appeal in student handout
- identify the need for a recent professional assessment for special assessment conditions
- provide more detail in school documentation about expectations for internal moderation and quality assurance and continue to monitor this process.

In line with good practice as seen nationally, the school should consider:

- revising documentation to refer to implementing the National Qualifications Framework
- rationalising sections on absences, lateness and extensions into one section about ‘Missed or Late Assessments’
- including strategies for dealing with authenticity issues
- deciding on a common approach to referencing sources and presenting bibliographies so that students have their learning of these conventions reinforced in all their subjects
- using the term ‘Breaches of the Rules’ instead of ‘Misconduct’ and broadening the scope of the policy accordingly
- including in departmental annual reports details of responses to external moderation
- encouraging teachers assessing standards from the NQF to check the *Key Indicator Checklist* for accuracy of entries and results
- providing a template including questions from *NCEA Update 16* to assist departments in analysing results data.