

Managing National Assessment Report

Epsom Girls' Grammar School

July 2018

What this report is about

This report summarises NZQA's review of how effectively Epsom Girls' Grammar School.

- 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
- *Assessment for Qualifications – National Certificate of Educational Achievement* (Staff Handbook)
- *National Qualifications Framework – NCEA made simple* (Student Handbook)
- *Assessment of and for Student Learning Policy*
- a sample of course outlines for Years 11, 12 and 13.

Two School Relationship Managers met with the Principal's Nominee, three students, the Learning Area Directors for Arts, English, Mathematics and Technology, and Heads of Department for Classics and Latin, and Science.

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

Epsom Girls' Grammar School

4 July 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 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

Epsom Girls' Grammar School demonstrates a strong digital teaching, learning and assessment vision. This and a culture of self-review ensure positive outcomes for students and credible assessment for the NCEA qualification. On-going collaborative evaluation is used to continuously strengthen and support consistent school-wide assessment practice.

Digital tools effectively support assessment practice by monitoring authenticity, offering a variety of evidence collection modes and the provision of feedback and feedforward information.

The development of student agency is a focus of the school with teacher inquiries and subsequent changes in assessment practice being used to foster the development of independence and student ownership of their learning and assessment.

Students and teachers share a vision of high academic expectations with many aiming for course and certificate endorsements and New Zealand Scholarships, where appropriate. The success of this vision is reflected in the school's high NCEA and Scholarship results.

Consistent school-wide effective assessment practice was described by teachers interviewed. Teachers use the flexibility of the NCEA model to maximise students' opportunities for success. Individual assessment programmes, as appropriate, and the provision of vocational pathways programmes support students to meet their qualification goals.

The school has robust embedded internal and external moderation processes and practices. Teachers value the internal moderation process for the opportunity it provides for professional discussion, ensuring consistency of assessor judgements. They use it to improve practice. External moderation feedback is used to confirm the robustness of internal moderation and inform understanding of standards.

Effective use of achievement data to track student progress and identify those at risk of not achieving a qualification allows the school to target those students needing literacy and numeracy support. The school's internal self-review process uses student evaluations and data analysis to inform course delivery improvements, including changes to assessment contexts and standards.

Efficient data management systems ensure timely reporting of data to NZQA, minimal late external entries and the checking of internal results for accuracy.

Assessment practice is well led by the Principal's Nominee and Qualifications Manager. Together, they facilitate discussion and the sharing of best assessment practice, setting high expectations for staff. The Qualifications Manager works with the pastoral team to support student achievement, modifying assessment programmes as appropriate. He works collegially with staff to support students to succeed.

Areas for improvement

While the number of internal entries made without a result reported has reduced, the school aims to reduce these further by checking that a result is reported for all internal entries or the entry is withdrawn if no assessment has taken place.

Additional information and refinements are required to the staff and student handbooks to clarify some assessment procedures and to reflect current school practice. When the documents are next updated the school plans to incorporate the suggested changes.

Students described their privacy not always being when protected signing off their grades in some subjects. The school plans to remind all staff of the need to protect student privacy during this process, to comply with the *Privacy Act, 1993*.

Agreed action

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

- remind teachers to ensure student privacy is protected when returning results.
- ensure all internal entries have a result reported or are withdrawn if no assessment has taken place
- reconcile memorandum of understanding with provider codes results are reported against.
- update the staff and student handbooks information as described in the communication section of this report.

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18 September 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 14 September 2014 Managing National Assessment Report

There were no agreed actions in the 2014 review.

Response to external moderation outcomes Consistently high overall external moderation agreement rates reflect robust internal moderation processes and effective use of external moderation feedback to inform assessment decisions.

Learning Area Directors are responsible for meeting with Heads of Department and Teachers in Charge to discuss the outcomes of external moderation. Action plans are developed where issues are identified. These are shared with the Principal's Nominee who oversees the process to follow-up external moderation by Learning Area Directors and the effectiveness of planned actions.

The Principal's Nominees ensures effective support is provided to improve assessment practice, where required. She monitors emerging trends in agreement rates and where an issue is identified implements additional strategies and support to develop teachers understanding of the assessment criteria to ensure credible results are reported. This thorough process has resulted in the high agreement rate between moderator and teacher.

Response to subjects where internally assessed results differ significantly from externally assessed standards NZQA provided the school with 2017 data identifying two subjects where the pattern of internal and external results differs from the national pattern for schools of a similar decile band. The Learning Area Directors had already identified the lack of congruence of internal and external results in the subjects. The possible reasons for the variance have been investigated including reviewing the verification process for internal standards. Assistance to better understand the achievement criteria expectations have been implemented and existing good practice confirmed, where appropriate. The Principal's Nominee is monitoring the effectiveness of the assistance to inform next steps, if required.

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 Epsom Girls' Grammar. A collaborative approach involving teachers and senior management is informed by on-going reflection, student voice and data analysis to improve student outcomes. With a focus on the continuous improvement of assessment best practice and the meeting of students' needs, the school has responded to changes in student learning needs and the increasing opportunities for student success through the use of digital tools and changes in assessment practice.

As a result of the school's collaborative internal self-review processes, a number of assessment changes have been or are planned to support on-going improvement of student achievement and ensure credible assessment practice.

These include:

- the introduction in 2017 of an Enrichment in Learning Programme at Year 11 to identify students during the year at risk of not achieving Level 1. This offers students the opportunity to complete missed credits or attempt additional standards. This programme is extended to Year 12 in 2018 owing to the success.
- a curriculum review currently underway with discussion on the number of credits in assessment programmes, exploring the place of NCEA Level 1 and the possibility of students beginning assessment for national qualifications at Year 12. The school has determined that any changes to Level 1 would be because it is in the best interest of students' achievement and their well-being.
- providing after school keyboarding and computing skills courses after identifying poor skill levels as a possible barrier to students presenting their best evidence. This also supports students who engage in digital external examinations and those with special assessment entitlement to complete their examination using a computer

Teachers interviewed articulated a whole-school commitment to ongoing review, the ownership of credible NCEA assessment practice and supporting all students to succeed to their best.

On-going self review has enabled the school to:

- respond to any issues identified during regular reviews
- initiate prompt action to address identified or potential risks
- clarify and further develop assessment best practice
- provide confidence and assurance to Senior Management that credible results are reported
- monitor progress toward strategic goals.

Teacher inquiries support ongoing development of best assessment practice

Professional Learning Groups have inquired into a range of areas that support the on-going improvement of student outcomes. Examples include development of critical thinking and writing, encouragement and development of student agency, and developing memory skills. Findings of the Learning Groups are shared across staff using a 'speed dating model' answering the questions '*what I tried, what worked/didn't work*'. Workshops are also offered for some inquires to share with the wider staff. In this way teacher inquiries are helping create better assessment outcomes for students.

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 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)

Epsom Girls' Grammar School has effective processes and procedures for meeting the assessment needs of their students by:

- differentiating assessment programmes to enable students to undertake an assessment course that meets their needs including:
 - assessing students when ready though flexible timeframes and collecting evidence of student achievement using a variety of modes
 - negotiating with students the standards in their assessment programme to reflect their abilities, interests and future pathways
 - offering vocational assessment programmes and multilevel classes to meet student needs
 - offering work and study skills numeracy and literacy standards to support students to meet NCEA Level 1 requirements.
- collecting school-based data to support applications for special assessment conditions, ensuring teachers are aware of individual students with special assessment conditions entitlements and providing resources for internal and external assessment where appropriate.
- responding to student voice by adjusting assessment tasks, contexts and required presentation formats without compromising the credibility of student evidence
- focusing on the quality of assessment by offering programmes with fewer credits so students “can do less, better”.

Epsom Girls' Grammar School has effective processes and procedures for:

- monitoring the authenticity of student work submitted by using suitable strategies during the assessment and marking process
- consistent school-wide assessment practice for managing further assessment opportunities, resubmission and extensions
- reporting Not Achieved for proven breaches of authenticity and where students have had an adequate assessment opportunity but submitted no work
- ensuring derived grades are based on standard-specific, authentic evidence from practice examinations
- managing NZQA digital pilot external examinations
- investigating appeals following the principals of natural justice.

Privacy Act (1993) reminder is required Students described that in some subjects the grade sign-off process did not protect their privacy. The school agreed to remind staff of the need to ensure student privacy is protected during this process.

Cultural contexts engage Pasifika in learning and assessment Cultural performances at PolyFest and assessment of dance standards provide relevant learning and assessment contexts for students to gain credits towards their NCEA

qualification, drawing upon their cultural background. Pasifika achievement is further supported by access to Lea Faka-Tonga and Samoan externally assessed standards.

Digital teaching, learning and assessment enhances student engagement and achievement outcomes The school uses a range of digital technologies to meet the learning styles and needs of students and enhance assessment opportunities. The school enables students and teachers to determine their level of digital engagement, in line with their levels of confidence and competence providing digital assessment evidence for internal and external assessment.

The school has operated Bring Your Own Device for the past three years, embracing the opportunity and potential that digital assessment offers. Proactive engagement with the use of digital tools in teaching and internal assessment practice allows students to present evidence using a choice of presentation methods and modes, enables on-going feedback and feedforward to be provided, and authenticity to be monitored.

The school has engaged in external examination pilots for the past three years and provided feedback to NZQA to support its digital assessment understanding and processes. Involvement in external assessment digital trials and pilots further supports student achievement and reflects classroom evidence collection and teaching and learning in some subject areas.

Ongoing professional learning and individual support assists with developing teacher confidence and skills to maximise the use of digital tools. This supports students to effectively present their best evidence in external examinations, portfolio submission or internal assessment. Professional development for the Examination Centre Manager, in addition to that provided by NZQA has ensured the smooth administration of digital external examinations

On-going development of digital protocols The school's ongoing review and refinement of processes and protocols to effectively manage digital evidence collection and storage ensures that evidence collected across the school is consistently authentic, credible and accessible for external moderation with privacy protected. This illustrates the school's embedded proactive self-review approach to identifying and implementing strategies to mitigate potential risks to the credibility of assessment and ensuring work is readily available for external moderation.

Agreed action

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

- remind teachers to ensure student privacy is protected when returning results.

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)

Epsom Girls' Grammar School has effective processes and procedures for managing internal moderation by:

- documenting the internal moderation process for each standard assessed
- requiring teachers to submit the completed internal moderation cover sheets to the Data Manager prior to reporting results to NZQA
- verifying grade judgements of purposefully selected samples of student work, using subject specialists within and outside the school including noting discussions on grade judgements for future reference
- using clarification documents and benchmarks from past student work to support assessment judgements.

Epsom Girls' Grammar School has effective processes and procedures for managing external moderation by:

- ensuring samples of student work are provided for external moderation by being adequately stored.
- using a random selection method that meets NZQA requirements
- valuing external moderation feedback and using it to modify tasks before further use, clarify understanding of the standard and confirm the robustness of the internal moderation process
- encouraging teachers to seek clarification or appeal external moderation reports, if appropriate.
- providing staff access to the school's NZQA Provider login to enable them to submit external moderation and view reports
- proactively monitoring moderation feedback and agreement rates to identify emerging trends and potential issues in a subject area.

Strengthened monitoring of internal moderation The school is encouraged to strengthen the effectiveness of the internal moderation process by reconciling moderation documentation to actual practice, rather than simply checking the compliance aspect of an *Internal Moderation Cover Sheet*.

A check by the Data Manager in 2017 of the copies of the completed *Internal Moderation Cover Sheets* identified that not all cover sheets had been submitted prior to results being submitted to NZQA. As a result, the Data Manager is checking more regularly in 2018.

As discussed at the review, requiring Learning Area Directors to review a sample of their moderation processes with Heads of Department and Teachers in Charge, focusing on aspects such as the selection of material, appropriateness of verifier used, and evidence of discussions around borderline examples of student work having taken place would ensure a more robust process. These should be carried out by all departments annually.

For consideration

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

- reconcile internal moderation documentation with actual practice to further strengthen practice and confirm reported results are credible.

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)

Epsom Girls' Grammar School effectively:

- **uses assessment-related data to support achievement outcomes for students by:**
 - monitoring student progress, identifying students at risk of not achieving Level 1 literacy and numeracy or a qualification and providing appropriate support
 - gathering student voice to evaluate courses, inform changes to programmes, contexts and standards
 - annually reporting to the Principal and Board of Trustees an analysis of NCEA achievement:
 - against set goals, identifying variances in internal and external standard achievement, unexpected results and trends
 - comparatively and historically to inform changes to standards and justify future course content
 - to identify variances between internally and externally assessed standards within courses to address differences and confirm that practice is credible.
- **reports accurate achievement data by:**
 - using a “sign-off” to confirm the accuracy of the internally assessed grades reported.
 - checking external entries to ensure minimal late entries
 - supporting students to use their Learner login to track their NCEA progress
 - reporting results against the correct provider codes of outside providers with which the school holds current memoranda of understanding.

Analysis of NCEA data supports strategic goals Robust analysis against national, decile and ethnicity by year and longitudinally is carried out within each learning area. This informs standards offered, resources and contexts used.

Heads of Department identify individual students '*at risk of not achieving 14 credits*' and '*with potential to excel for Merit and Excellence endorsement*' and what strategies they used during the year to support these student's achievement and the outcome. This school-wide expectation reflects teachers' ownership of assessment and vision to assist all students to succeed to the best of their ability.

The Principal's Nominee prepares an in-depth summary report for the Board of Trustees against the school's strategic goals.

Strengthening of checking processes to ensure all internal entries have a result reported The number of internal entries without a grade reported has reduced significantly over the past two years the school agreed that this could be

further reduced. There were a number of internal entries, particularly unit standard entries, without a result reported in 2017. The school plans to strengthen the checking process to ensure internal entries reflect a student's assessment programme.

Memoranda of understanding are being centrally stored The central storage of memorandum of understanding is being implemented in 2018. The request to provide a sample of memorandum of understanding at the review identified, to the Principals' Nominee, the advantage of holding a copy centrally. These were held by the departments responsible for reporting results of the external provider prior to 2018.

This is good practice as it will enable the school to annually reconcile results against provider codes grades are reported against to confirm a memorandum of understanding is held for all results reported under.

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:

- ensure all internal entries have a result reported or are withdrawn if no assessment has taken place
- reconcile memorandum of understanding with provider codes results are reported against.

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))

Epsom Girls' Grammar School has effective processes and procedures for:

- communicating assessment policy and procedures to staff, students and parents using written, digital and face-to-face methods
- reporting on students' progress towards qualifications, including providing online access to the information held on the school's student management system
- provide professional learning to support teachers use digital tools effectively in teaching and assessment
- informing students about suitable learning pathways and qualification requirements for University.

Epsom Girls' Grammar School assists common understanding of assessment practice by:

- using Head of Department and staff meetings to clarify changes of procedures, expectations and facilitating discussion on good assessment practice
- improving parent and student understanding of NCEA and assessment procedures through targeted meetings
- checking whether teachers, students and parents are following processes.

Clarification of resubmission and further assessment terminology is recommended Teachers and students used the term reassessment when describing resubmission. However, both correctly described the correct application of resubmission and further assessment opportunities. To avoid confusion, it is suggested that the term resubmission and further assessment opportunities be used in place of reassessment to ensure consistency with NZQA and to avoid confusion.

Effective link between pastoral team and Qualifications Manager supports best outcomes for students The Qualifications Manager, as a member of the pastoral team, works to support student achievement, tracking achievement and negotiating modifications to assessment programmes, as appropriate. He works collegially with staff to support students to succeed. He manages appeals and queries by students and parents on assessment processes and outcomes in discussion with the Principal's Nominee. This collaborative approach ensures the ongoing maintenance of assessment processes and shared knowledge within the school.

Effective communication supports consistent assessment practice The school's proactive approach to open communications encourages a robust sharing of ideas between Senior Management, Learning Area Directors, Heads of Department and teachers. This supports the ongoing development of consistent and effective assessment practice school-wide.

Relevant and accessible up-to-date handbooks, regular professional learning on assessment best practice and digitising of assessment information, including links to additional information, support ready access for staff and students.

The school agreed that when the handbooks are next updated the following additions and clarifications would be included to reflect current practice:

In the staff handbook include:

- the process for verification and justification of grades from assessments that generate derived grades
- information on purposeful and strategic selection of student work for internal moderation.

In the staff and student handbook include:

- that students can appeal any assessment decision
- who the final arbiter of an appeal is.

Course outline information to be reviewed The assessment information provided to students is not consistent with the staff handbook and is presented in different formats, potentially making it difficult to follow. A common template to standardise the assessment information provided to students is suggested for consideration. This would provide consistency of information for students and parents.

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 the staff and student handbooks as agreed at the review.

For consideration

To extend good practice in ensuring that information about assessment to students, staff and families is current and accessible, the school is encouraged to consider:

- standardise the assessment information provided in course outlines.