

Managing National Assessment Report

Mercury Bay Area School

June 2017

What this report is about

This report summarises NZQA's review of how effectively Mercury Bay Area 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 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
- *Mercury Bay Area School NAG2: Policy 2.3 Reporting on Student Progress and Achievement*
- *Mercury Bay Area School NAG1: Policy 1.2 Assessment*
- *Mercury Bay Area School Assessment Procedures for Years 11-13 (Staff Handbook)*
- a variety of course information for the subject areas interviewed.

The School Relationship Manager met with the Principal's Nominee, Assistant Principal's Nominee, three students and Heads of Faculty for English, Mathematics, Physical Education and Health, and Social Sciences.

There was a report-back session with the Principal's Nominee and Assistant 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

Mercury Bay Area School

22 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 anticipate, 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

Mercury Bay Area School demonstrates an effective culture of collaborative self-review to ensure the credibility of assessment, maximise opportunities for students, and ensure valid and credible results are reported. Self-review enables the school to evaluate the effectiveness of current practice and make considered responses to identified issues. This reflective practice is focused on raising and maintaining achievement for all students.

The focus of providing each student with a valid and relevant pathway has seen the school continue to review its programmes and timetable structure. Courses are designed to meet the aspirations, interests, abilities and needs of all students. Existing programmes are supplemented with the use of outside providers and Gateway opportunities. Differentiation of assessment is evident and allows students to present their best evidence for achievement. Changing the context of assessment tasks, and offering students a variety of ways to present evidence, help engagement in the assessment process.

Internal moderation procedures are clearly understood and practised by teachers. The monitoring of internal moderation now lies with Heads of Faculty and ensures no results are entered or submitted to NZQA without evidence of a completed *Internal Moderation Cover Sheet*. Follow up faculty visits by the Assistant Principal's Nominee confirm the effectiveness of the process.

Student work is stored securely and allows the school to fully comply with requests for external moderation. Teachers use feedback from external moderation to reflect on their practice. In the case of identified issues or a low agreement rate, a meeting is held with the Principal's Nominee and more detailed responses including an action plan is required.

School data is accurate and reported to NZQA in a timely manner. Data analysis by teachers is used to review the effectiveness of their programmes and plan future direction.

Communication documentation is comprehensive and reflects the audience for which it is intended. It is reinforced by the mentoring and pastoral support for students undertaken throughout the year. The school has acknowledged the advantages of presenting course material to students in a standardised format.

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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 1-2 April 2015 Managing National Assessment Report All action items from the previous Managing National Assessment report have been actioned. There were two required items both relating to internal moderation. They were:

- ensure staff complete the internal moderation process for all internally assessed standards (CAAS Guidelines 2.6ii)
- ensure internal moderation is adequately monitored by senior management. (CAAS Guidelines 2.6iii)

Following the previous Managing National Assessment review, the monitoring system was immediately strengthened to ensure internal moderation was completed for every standard where results were reported to NZQA. This is discussed in more detail in the Moderation section of this report.

The process used for the random selection of student work for external moderation has been updated to meet NZQA requirements.

Appropriate support and guidance has been provided for areas identified through external moderation as having ongoing low agreement rates.

Response to external moderation outcomes An effective process for following-up on external moderation feedback is in place. The Principal's Nominee reads and forwards a copy of every external moderation report to the relevant Head of Faculty. In the most recent round, where consistency issues were signalled, he held discussions with staff and developed action plans which he will monitor as required. Teachers acknowledge the value of external moderation feedback and use it as part of their review of, and preparation for, assessment of standards.

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)

The college has an effective culture of internal self-review to ensure credible assessment practices and utilise the flexibility of the NCEA assessment model to meet students' needs.

The school continues to review and develop its assessment practices to engage and meet the needs of its students. The school has identified the changing composition of its senior school with a high number of returning students who have gained NCEA Level 2, including a number at year 14, but for whom their pathway is unlikely to be University. Tracking the destination of all students leaving school has continued the focus on developing meaningful student pathways and supporting students into

these. A greater awareness and promotion of Vocational Pathways and increased numbers of students linking with local opportunities through Gateway are examples of appropriate responses. The school's charter goal that 95 percent of senior students leaving the school will proceed into employment, training, or further education reinforces its commitment to this.

A collaborative approach is evident. Led by the Principal's Nominee and Assistant Principal's Nominee, the regular Head of Faculty meetings are a "vehicle for discussion and decision-making". The school has acknowledged and recognised the role of the Heads of Faculty in managing national assessment. Regular NCEA teacher and Faculty meetings ensure consistency of practice and understanding, and refine assessment practice.

Reflection on NCEA assessment practices occurs to evaluate the effectiveness of current systems, to respond to identified issues and to explore potential improvements. Several assessment related initiatives have been introduced to improve current practice and enhance student achievement. These include:

- reviewing school-wide assessment procedures including managing appeals and resubmissions, further assessment opportunity and authenticity
- centralising the monitoring of moderation for Industry Training Organisations
- moving away from evening NCEA meetings for parents towards online communication
- changes to senior school timetable structure and period length including changes to I-time and the introduction of Student Independent Learning Time (SILT).

Self-review is ongoing and the school communicated some of its identified areas for future review and discussion including:

- the format and mode of communicating course information to students
- what and how they communicate with parents and caregivers, including the possible use of their student management system parent portal
- possible areas where the school can extend its consent to assess to meet student interests and support their future pathways
- aspects associated with digital assessment such as storage of material.

These actions and examples demonstrate that not only does the school have the capacity to identify assessment-related issues and, where changes are needed, to make an appropriate response, but also to continually seek to improve current practice and performance.

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)

Mercury Bay Area School has effective processes and procedures for meeting the needs of their students by:

- extending assessment opportunities including:
 - accessing online programmes through the Virtual Learning Network and Te Aho o Te Kura Pounamu (The Correspondence School) for courses the school is unable to offer
 - developing opportunities such as Marine Sciences and Engineering that recognise the unique location of the wider school environment
 - engaging with outside providers to offer a range of vocational and trade-based courses
- using integrated courses and a thematic approach where assessment falls out of the study and evidence can be used for more than one standard at a time
- adapting courses and contexts to meet the interests of students and give realistic and topical situations
- differentiating and individualising assessment programmes including:
 - assessing students when ready though flexible timeframes
 - offering multilevel classes
 - negotiating with students the standards to be undertaken in their assessment programme to reflect individual needs, interests and future pathways.
- identifying and supporting those entitled to special assessment conditions.

Mercury Bay Area School has effective processes and procedures for:

- ensuring credible assessment through consistent school-wide assessment practice on managing appeals, resubmissions, and further assessment opportunities
- managing authenticity through a shared understanding of process and strategies for staff and students
- meeting the requirements of the Privacy Act 1993.

A wide range of evidence gathering practices used Broadening of evidence gathering methods promotes achievement by allowing students to present work in ways that best meet their needs and the standard being assessed. Examples include collaboration using cross curricular assessment, evidence being used for two standards and authentic assessment contexts such as group work, blogs and visual presentations. In one core subject area, students select the course in the context that interests them and/or links with their possible pathway, such as Gaming, Trades, Communications and Fantasy.

School leaders recognise that as they develop alternative approaches to evidence gathering and extend assessment practices it is important to continue to build

teacher and student understanding so there is no compromise to the quality of assessment practice. An example is recent discussion on how to recognise the individual input and ensure authentic evidence when assessing a group context.

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 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)

Mercury Bay Area School 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, including noting verification discussion and decisions on internal moderation cover sheets
- ensuring standards owned by Industry Training Organisations are treated in the same manner as NZQA owned standards
- monitoring the completion of the process.

Mercury Bay Area School has effective processes and procedures for managing external moderation by:

- ensuring samples of student work are provided by being adequately stored
- selecting samples of student work randomly to NZQA requirements
- responding effectively to external moderation outcomes.

Improved internal moderation monitoring following school review The monitoring process for internal moderation, instigated immediately following the previous Managing National Assessment review, involved the Assistant Principal's Nominee collecting a copy of every completed *Internal Moderation Cover Sheet* and reconciling them with course outlines. The school reviewed this and it was deemed to be cumbersome and focused on compliance. Delegating monitoring of moderation to the Heads of Faculty has enabled the Assistant Principal's Nominee to focus on its effectiveness. Discussion was held during the Managing National Assessment review on the Assistant Principal's Nominee's role in this process including:

- annually visiting each faculty area to review process and record findings
- using a random selection of reported standards to review the internal moderation process undertaken
- focusing on identified teachers and/or subject areas that may require greater support in completing internal moderation.

This process ensures that each year senior management can be confident that documentation of the completed process is reconciled with actual practice and that credible results are being reported.

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 found that data management and use supports student achievement outcomes. (CAAS Guidelines 2.6v, 2.7i-iii)

Mercury Bay Area School effectively:

- **uses assessment-related data to support achievement outcomes for students by:**
 - timely review of assessment throughout the year following the completion of each standard to inform future use
 - gathering student voice to evaluate courses, inform changes to programmes, contexts and standards
 - developing staff appraisal goals and encouraging professional learning enquiries around understanding of assessment and improving student achievement
 - using data to report annual results to the senior management and Board of Trustees and focus on identified school targets
 - tracking student achievement to identify students at risk of not achieving their chosen assessment pathway.
- **reports accurate achievement data by:**
 - including students and teachers in accuracy checks
 - supporting students to use their NZQA Learner login and 'KAMAR app' to track their NCEA progress and identify errors
 - using the correct provider code for assessment undertaken by external providers
 - ensuring all internal entries are reported with a result or withdrawn as appropriate
 - using the Key Indicators to identify and resolve data submission errors
 - 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 found that school communication ensures understanding about assessment. (CAAS Guidelines 2.4i(f), 2.4v, 2.6vii, 2.7iib)

Mercury Bay Area School has effective processes and procedures for:

- communicating accurate assessment policy and procedures to staff, students and their families in print, in person and digitally
- regularly reviewing the mode and content of communications to ensure they are fit for purpose and current
- providing students with assessment information about each of their courses they undertake online and in hardcopy
- encouraging students to use their Learner login and become familiar with the NZQA website
- supporting student understanding of NCEA by using the student academic captain to communicate and discuss information with classes
- ensuring a memorandum of understanding is held for all outside providers against whose codes grades are reported.

Mercury Bay Area School assists common understanding of assessment practice by:

- ensuring relevant NZQA updates are circulated to NCEA teachers and discussed as necessary
- informing teachers about assessment best practice and providing opportunities to discuss changes through regular, timetabled Head of Faculty and NCEA meetings
- helping students understand what they need to achieve to gain a qualification

Encourage the use of standardised course information The school has identified that course outlines and associated assessment information currently used by faculties differ in format and in the information presented. They recognise it is good practice for course information to follow a common template and the Managing National Assessment visit confirmed the following advantages:

- Consistent course information is easier for parents and students to understand.
- Schoolwide assessment practice can be managed through a central document with the use of links to this and/or the NZQA website that allows a consistent and up to date message.
- Obsolete terms such as compassionate consideration, sighted in one document, would be removed and details such as further assessment opportunities can be communicated in a standardised manner.
- Different faculties and subjects can still have additional subject-specific information for students as the use of a common outline does not preclude that.

An option, available through the school's student management system, was discussed during the visit.

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:

- developing a course outline template to standardise the information provided to students.