

# Managing National Assessment Report

## Thames High School

March 2019

## What this report is about

This report summarises NZQA's review of how effectively Thames High 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 2019* (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
- *Thames High School Staff Assessment Handbook* (Staff Handbook)
- *Thames High School Student Assessment Handbook 2019* (Student Handbook)
- a sample of course outlines for Years 11, 12 and 13.

The School Relationship Manager met with the:

- Principal's Nominee
- Head(s) of Department for:
  - English
  - Mathematics
  - Music
  - Physical Education
  - Science
  - Visual Arts
- three students.

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

## Thames High School

08 March 2019

### 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 three years.

### What the school is doing well

Thames High School has a focus on improving student achievement and wellbeing through meeting student assessment needs. Teachers review their programmes annually to deliver courses that provide relevant contexts for assessment. They analyse data to plan and deliver courses that are appropriate for their students by using the flexibility of the NCEA model.

Students and teachers discussed a wide range of methods used to differentiate assessment programmes, provide for individual student needs and gather evidence of achievement including using digital tools to gather assessment evidence.

Whānau teachers and the Careers Advisor mentor students to follow a range of academic and vocational pathways. In 2019 a new Adventure class and programme has been developed to support students who are at risk of not achieving. Individualised Educational Programmes are established as required.

External moderation feedback is used to improve teacher understanding of standards. Action plans ensure an effective process for responding to issues identified through moderation. Staff engage with professional development such as Best Practice Workshops to improve assessor judgements. Teachers are also encouraged to access external verifiers and advisory services as appropriate to improve the accuracy of grade boundary judgements.

The school reports results to NZQA in a timely manner and uses key indicators to check any variance. The appointment of a Systems Administrator has improved checking processes and data entry. Data analysis is used to monitor student progress and identify students at risk of not achieving their assessment goals.

The school has confirmed the appointment of a new Principal's Nominee and the new Systems Administrator in her role. This team had been working with the previous Principal's Nominee in response to an identified need for process improvement in data entry including setting up mark books, making entries and checking internal moderation. The team has made progress in reviewing data systems and checking processes.

The Board of Trustees assessment policies have been consolidated as one guidelines document. Assessment information is available to students and their parents through a range of media. Students confirmed that staff are approachable

and communicate clearly with them over assessment practice. Assessment progress is regularly communicated to students and their parents.

### **Areas for improvement**

The Principal's Nominee agreed that as a next step she will make an annual moderation monitoring visit to reconcile the information provided on internal moderation cover sheets with actual practice in departments. This process will strengthen the monitoring of internal moderation by senior management. It will also provide teachers with clarification of the school's internal moderation requirements and set clear expectations about how to meet them. Following these requirements has the potential to reduce teacher workload over time, in particular as teachers become more practised at recording reasons for grade decisions during the verification process.

As a next step, internal moderation selection could consider a strategic selection of student work for grade verification, with a sample size sufficient to confirm assessment decisions are consistent with the standard.

Documentation needs to be reviewed and updated to ensure a consistent message is communicated to all stakeholders to reflect the agreed actions in the 2017 Managing National Assessment review report.

The staff assessment handbook needs an annual review and aspects of the school's documentation mentioned in the previous Managing National Assessment review still need to be clarified. Specifically, the handbook should explain that resubmission is offered by the teacher. Updates also need to include reference to the use of school-based evidence for special assessment conditions. These changes, and several others mentioned in the documentation section of this report, have been integrated into practice and currently provide a partial response to the previous external review. Practice must now be fully clarified in the staff handbook.

While a common course template has been developed, there remains significant duplication and some mixed messaging of this information in departmental course outlines. This needs to be rationalised so that assessment messages are consistent.

## **Agreed action**

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

- strengthen the internal moderation monitoring process by senior management, to reconcile the process, the associated documentation and actual practice.
- update the staff handbook as outlined in this report
- review course outlines to avoid duplication and ensure that information provided is consistent.

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7 May 2019

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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 31 August 2017 Managing National Assessment Report** Of the seven agreed actions one is complete.

The school has made progress and has partially completed the remaining six action items by:

- partially responding to the findings of the external review recommendations
- clarifying the resubmission process with staff and in the staff handbook, but are still to document that this is to be offered by the teacher
- reviewing the documentation relating to special assessment conditions. They are yet to include reference to school-based evidence, to align with actual practice in the school
- improving staff understanding of grade verification. Staff understanding of sufficiency requirements for internal moderation is yet to be developed so that the sample of marked student work selected for internal moderation is strategic
- reviewing the staff handbook
- standardising the information provided to students in the course outline to ensure this is in a consistent format. Duplication remains an issue.

**Response to external moderation outcomes** Response to external moderation is now effectively monitored by the Principal's Nominee. Staff review feedback from their external moderation. Where there is a low agreement rate between assessor and NZQA's moderator, staff meet with the Principal's Nominee and develop a documented action plan. This has resulted in:

- selection of new verifiers from outside the region
- adjustments to assessment materials and assessment schedules
- enrolment of several teachers in NZQA online Best Practice workshops to improve their ability to make accurate assessor judgements.

The Principal's Nominee checks that planned actions have been completed in a timely manner.

### 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)*

The school's previous Managing National Assessment Review agreed there was a need to develop processes to address external review, and verification and sufficiency requirements for internal moderation. The school's new Principal's

Nominee is supported in embedding these new processes by the System's Administrator. They meet weekly to review that assessment and internal moderation processes as identified in the 2017 Managing National Assessment review are increasingly consistent. They brief Heads of Department monthly on assessment practice.

Recent changes include:

- the introduction of an extended mentoring period with whānau teachers to monitor student assessment needs
- a Principal's Nominee sign-off of centrally stored internal moderation cover sheets before grades are reported to NZQA
- HOD checks on the timeliness of internal moderation cycles to ensure that students receive grades back within two weeks
- development of the role of a Systems' Administrator to set up and maintain mark books, enter data, and monitor completion of the internal moderation process
- the Systems Administrator using KAMAR to generate and provide the random selection of student work for external moderation
- ensuring effective Principal's Nominee follow-up of external moderation action plans through dated changes on action plans to ensure completion
- training staff to make accurate entries and withdrawals, reduce late entries for externals and to engage in regular data checking processes as a result of a review of data management in 2017
- introducing whānau teacher consultation on external entries before 1 September, to minimise late entries
- the Principal's Nominee reconciling Memoranda of Understanding with results reported, to ensure these are current
- adding information on the *Privacy Act 1993* to the student handbook.

The school should continue to develop its capacity to self-review, identify and respond effectively, and in a timely manner to identified issues and risks.

***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 2019 5.5)*

### **Thames High School has effective processes and procedures for meeting the assessment needs of their students by:**

- increasing the range of pathways and taster courses for students by using a range of external providers including Trades Academies
- providing offsite learning opportunities through the Video Learning Network
- providing differentiated learning opportunities within classes including offering optional standards and multi-level classes
- using a range of evidence-gathering strategies to engage learners
- using milestone checklists, feedback and feedforward to ensure students present their best evidence
- assessing when ready where appropriate.

### **Thames High School has effective processes and procedures for:**

- celebrating academic success through awards assemblies and badges
- ensuring that derived grades are based on valid standard-specific evidence
- monitoring authenticity to ensure students present their own work
- managing NZQA examinations
- meeting the requirements of the *Privacy Act 1993*.

**Focus on developing new programmes to meet student needs** Thames High School has introduced an Adventure Class to better engage the learning and assessment needs of a tracked cohort of students. To engage students, the programme is based around physical learning and connection with literacy contexts that might better meet the needs of Māori boys as identified in the school's 2018 Education Review Office report.

**Develop access for students who may be entitled to special assessment conditions** The school has developed its processes to identify students who may be entitled to special assessment conditions. The Special Education Needs Co-ordinator has attended a training seminar and is using school-based evidence to identify students who may be entitled to special assessment conditions. School-based evidence to establish student need is being collected in years 9 and 10.

**Focus on Science, Technology Engineering and Mathematics – STEM equity ratio** A small group is considering the school's STEM equity ratio and as a next step plans to establish an inquiry group to consider strategies that can improve choice and access to STEM subjects for students identified in NZQA's recent statistics report, who may succeed in these standards.

**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 2019 6.4b)*

### **Thames High School has effective processes and procedures for managing internal moderation by:**

- ensuring all assessment materials are critiqued prior to use
- verifying grade judgements using subject specialists from within and outside the school
- documenting their process on the internal moderation cover sheet
- using clarifications documents and holding benchmark exemplars in departments
- taking part in NZQA's Transforming Assessment Praxis professional development opportunities to assist in clarifying staff understanding of assessment judgements

### **Thames High School has effective processes and procedures for managing external moderation by:**

- selecting samples of student work randomly to NZQA requirements
- ensuring samples of student work are provided by being adequately stored.

**Strengthen internal moderation monitoring in departments** Senior Management needs to strengthen the monitoring system to better reconcile its centralised internal moderation documentation with actual practice. This could include the Principal's Nominee documenting her findings when she visits departments to check processes, storage and strategic selection. The monitoring visit would better embed staff understanding of the purpose of internal moderation and better assure senior management that only those results that have been subject to internal moderation are reported to NZQA.

**Consider sufficiency and strategic selection for internal moderation** Staff need to continue to develop their understanding of sufficiency for internal moderation to ensure that selection processes are strategic.

### **Agreed action**

NZQA and senior management agree on the following action to improve the school's internal and external moderation to assure assessment quality. Senior management undertakes to:

- strengthen the internal moderation monitoring process by senior management, to reconcile documentation with actual practice

### **For consideration**

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

- further develop staff understanding of sufficiency for internal moderation to ensure that selection processes are strategic.

## 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)*

### **Thames High School effectively uses assessment-related data to support achievement outcomes for students by:**

- tracking student progress towards the qualification through credit summaries
- requiring Heads of Department to report to the Principal and the Board of Trustees an annual evaluation of NCEA achievement towards school goals to inform future teaching and assessment programmes
- identifying target groups of students at risk of not achieving, and negotiating changes to programmes in discussion with students, their deans and whānau as appropriate
- including student voice in the review of assessment to help evaluate courses

### **Thames High School reports accurate achievement data by:**

- ensuring timely and accurate reporting of results to NZQA
- encouraging students and parents to use the student portal to check their results and verify these for accuracy
- using their Key Indicators and data file submission reports to check and resolve any data issues
- ensuring that all staff understand that entries should have a result reported or that they are withdrawn appropriately where the student has not had an adequate opportunity to be assessed
- conducting a student sign-off of grades at the end of the year to confirm these.

**Processes introduced have improved data accuracy** The school has introduced a number of initiatives to improve the accuracy and timeliness of making entries and reporting results. Teacher and Systems Administrator data checks have reduced the number of late entries, ensured standards are accurately assigned to courses and that teacher mark books are set up correctly at the beginning of each year to minimise unassigned standards. These checking processes, when combined with clear internal marking and moderation deadlines have allowed for more timely and accurate reporting of entries and results to NZQA.

### **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))*

### **Thames High School has effective processes and procedures for**

- providing Plain English assessment policy and handbooks to teachers, students and their families digitally and in print
- centralising memoranda of understanding with the Data Administrator and ensuring these are checked and reconciled annually by the Principal's Nominee with results reported.

### **Thames High School assists common understanding of assessment practice by:**

- holding discussions with students to ensure they know what they need to achieve their qualification
- informing teachers about NZQA updates and providing opportunities to discuss changes.

**Consolidated Board of Trustees Assessment policies** The Principal's Nominee has consolidated a variety of policies into the "Student Assessment and Achievement Guidelines". This document rationalises a range of policy documents on assessment as suggested in the 2017 Managing National Assessment review.

### **Update information in the staff handbook as suggested in previous reviews**

The previous Managing National Assessment review suggested changes to the school's assessment handbook. While several changes have been made there are still refinements required as part of the Self Review Section of this report. In addition the following changes should be made to ensure currency:

- ensure an accurate review date is noted on the cover page
- in line with changes to terminology at NZQA, update the title from National Qualifications Procedures to New Zealand Qualifications Procedures
- link sections of the handbook to the NZQA website
- ensure that staff handbook clarifies that the storage requirement for internal moderation is for two years or until the materials are replaced, rather than the current "one year"
- remove reference to "accreditation" and ensure this is updated to "Consent to Assess" throughout the document.

**Standardise course outlines for consistency** The previous two Managing National Assessment reviews agreed that the school would develop and monitor the use of a common template for assessment statements to provide students with the required subject information in a consistent format. While this has been developed there remains significant duplication and some mixed messaging of this information in departmental course outlines. For example, some department outlines referred to "reassessment opportunities". Consistent use of terminology will help clarify student understanding of key assessment processes.

**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 handbook as outlined in this report
- review course outlines to avoid duplication of messages and ensure that information provided is consistent.