

Managing National Assessment Report

Fairfield College

May 2019

What this report is about

This report summarises NZQA's review of how effectively Fairfield 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 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
- *Fairfield College New Zealand Qualification Framework Assessment and Reporting Procedures Senior Student Handbook 2019*
- *Fairfield College Assessment and Reporting Processes 2019* (Staff Handbook)
- Board of Trustees *Student Achievement Policy 2018*
- a sample of course outlines.

The School Relationship Manager met with:

- the Principal's Nominee
- Deputy Principal – Curriculum/Assessment
- Heads of Faculty for:
 - English
 - Mathematics
 - Science
 - Te Reo Māori
- 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

Fairfield College

24 May 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.

At the request of NZQA, and with the school's agreement, this review was rescheduled from 2018.

What the school is doing well

Fairfield College's mission statement of 'personalised achievement for every individual' has driven recent self-review and the resulting changes to the timetable structure and ways of managing national assessment.

The school is focusing on student pathways and wellbeing by reducing assessment loads and increasing support through Waananga Akotahi time. Year 11 is now considered the start of a two-year programme with the goal for students to gain NCEA Level 1 and 2 by the end of Year 12. Teachers are committed to adapting their programmes to focus more on deeper learning rather than just the assessment. Continued discussion to move the focus and language of the school from assessment driven programmes to learning opportunities continues.

Assessment practice is understood and well-managed by teachers. Consistent processes ensure that results reported to NZQA for national qualifications are credible. The reporting of entries and results to NZQA is complete, timely and accurate. Achievement data is used to reflect on student achievement outcomes, inform course design, measure strategic goals and the effectiveness of changes made.

Waananga Akotahi time has been extended and is used for the monitoring and tracking of student achievement progress. Literacy and numeracy are the key focus areas for Year 11, and grade predictions help ensure students are on track to reach their goals. Senior subject teachers analyse and evaluate NCEA results data, which is reported to their Head of Faculty and in turn the Principal and Board of Trustees. The analysis is a basis for reflection on the previous year's programmes, assessment contexts used, and standards offered.

Internal moderation practice is effectively undertaken and managed school wide. Teachers critique tasks, verify a strategic selection of student work using subject specialists, and document the process through the school's online application. The Principal's Nominee holds discussions with learning areas to ensure the documented moderation processes reflect actual practice. External moderation outcomes are discussed with relevant staff and appropriate responses are negotiated to address any identified issues. A *Response to External Moderation* form provides a record of

these discussion and notes any action items. This record enables Senior Management to evaluate the effectiveness of the responses.

Relevant assessment information is available online and in hardcopy for staff and students to access. Open communication between staff ensures a consistent understanding of expected procedures. The students interviewed were well-informed about the NCEA qualification.

Strong leadership and sound communication of assessment procedures and processes by the Principal's Nominee has led to shared expectations of effective practice. This has facilitated professional learning that is continuing throughout the current period of change being undertaken by the school. The Principal's Nominee has a thorough knowledge of school practice and manages changes and issues to improve current practice. Staff acknowledged her professionalism, approachability and support. The Principal's Nominee is supported in her work by the Principal, who alongside the staff, supports students to achieve.

Areas for improvement

Some inconsistent understanding and application of a resubmission was evident during this review. Clarification of the process and encouraging the correct terminology of resubmission and further assessment opportunity will assist staff to apply it consistently and align with NZQA requirements.

The number of students applying for special assessment conditions is fewer than would be expected relative to other similar schools. The school acknowledges that special assessment conditions can assist students in addressing barriers to fair and equitable assessment and is working to identify and support students who may be eligible.

Agreed action

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

- clarify the process of resubmission and align language with NZQA terminology
- ensure that students eligible to use special assessment conditions are identified and supported.

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29 July 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 17 September 2015 Managing National Assessment Report

The school has addressed the three agreed action items from this report.

Response to external moderation outcomes Teachers view external moderation positively as a source of feedback on their assessment judgements and are aware of the role it plays in reviewing the effectiveness of their internal moderation.

The Principal's Nominee meets with the Head of Faculty to discuss any issues arising from external moderation. A *Response to External Moderation* form records details of discussion and action items.

Feedback from external moderation is used to highlight areas that may require further professional development support. The school has identified one area with ongoing consistency issues over several years. Senior Management is working with teachers within this department and have also engaged additional support from outside agencies to assist the department to review, guide and support assessment practices such as task development, moderation procedures and verification expectations. This is good practice and the school is confident that the improved understanding, and internal moderation practices happening within the department will be reflected in more consistent outcomes in external moderation.

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)

Recent self-review processes have resulted in significant changes to the school's assessment programmes and timetable structures. The school has analysed its achievement results, reviewed research findings such as the Education Review Office 2015 report *Wellbeing for Young people's Success at Secondary School* and consulted with teachers, students and the wider school community. This has led to a changed school focus to develop a more personalised approach to meet student needs to improve learning and engagement, and ultimately raise achievement.

Changes have included:

- managing student workloads particularly in Year 11 by
 - limiting the number of credits offered in each course
 - reducing the number of subjects chosen
 - limiting entrance to external standards
 - focusing on the attainment of Literacy and Numeracy requirements in Year 11

- promoting Year 11 as part of a two year “Springboard Stage” whereby NCEA Level 1 and Level 2 are awarded by the end of Year 12
- adjusting the school timetable to three 90-minute teaching blocks per day to enable deeper learning to be undertaken
- implementing a longer Waananga Akotahi time to focus on supporting students through mentoring and academic tracking.

Review continues to reflect on the success of these strategies and moving the language of focus from assessment-driven to learning-driven programmes. Alongside these changes, the school remains committed to ensuring effective assurance processes that confirm the credibility and quality of assessment, and adherence to NZQA requirements.

The experienced Principal's Nominee, supported by the Principal and other senior managers, continues to provide consistent and effective leadership around all aspects of managing national assessment. There is an increasing responsibility given to Heads of Faculty to oversee assessment practices within their own subject areas. This is helping to embed expectations and is developing capacity to manage national assessment throughout the school.

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)

Fairfield College has effective processes and procedures for meeting the assessment needs of their students by:

- providing differentiated assessment within courses
- extending assessment opportunities by
 - using external providers to deliver courses the school is unable to offer
 - extending the school's consent to assess to better meet pathway options for students
- collecting evidence of student achievement using a range of methods including written portfolios, digital evidence, oral and performances
- engaging in digital trials and pilots
- efficiently managing NZQA external examinations.

Fairfield College has effective processes and procedures for:

- supporting students in their learning programmes and realising their future pathways through:
 - the Careers Pathway Head of Faculty who meets regularly to mentor and guide senior students
 - Goal Setting and Planning one-on-one interviews with senior students and their Pouako
 - regular academic focused conversations during Waananga Akotahi
 - involvement in the regional mentoring programme for identified students to set goals and provide alternative courses when needed
- monitoring the authenticity of student work submitted for assessment by using suitable strategies during the assessment and marking process.

Identify and support students eligible to use special assessment conditions

The school has identified the need to review processes relating to special assessment conditions to ensure that eligible students are identified and appropriately supported. Special assessment conditions help to remove barriers for students that may prevent them having a fair opportunity to achieve. Based on decile patterns, the school is likely to have around four percent of students who would be eligible for special assessment conditions. The school is encouraged to consider the use of school-based evidence in its applications to NZQA, which can help to remove the financial barrier of using independent assessor reports.

Māori and Pasifika engagement and success in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) subjects Heads of Faculty use data to review participation and performance of students in STEM areas. The school is investigating strategies such as developing links with outside organisations to increase the range of opportunities available to students in STEM. A current example shared is the Science department which has formed a partnership with the Waikato District Health Board to encourage STEM participation and engagement.

Clarify the resubmission process and ensure consistent terminology A resubmission may be offered if a teacher, at their discretion, judges a student has made a minor error or omission that they can identify and correct on their own. It should not be student driven, offered to all, or a planned aspect of the assessment. The review identified variation in the use of the term and understanding around this process.

It should be noted that for some forms of assessment, especially if the evidence is gathered by portfolio, or over an extended period of time, a resubmission may not be appropriate. Teachers should make use of checkpoints, draft dates, milestones and feedback/feedforward. These will usually remove the need for resubmission after the final due date. The term resubmission should not be used during the assessment period to avoid confusion and to support its correct usage.

In a similar manner, the use of further assessment opportunity rather than resit or reassessment, when referring to an additional assessment opportunity undertaken following further teaching and learning, will ensure consistent language throughout the school that aligns with NZQA requirements.

Continue to review ways to manage assessment programmes for students As the main focus for students, particularly those in Year 11, has moved away from the completion of standards for qualifications to a broader learning programme, the language and application of assessment requirements needs to continue to be discussed and reviewed. This includes what constitutes an adequate assessment opportunity, managing the entry and withdrawal of students from standards and the awarding of Not Achieved.

Assessment programmes should be tailored so that students, with their teachers, can select standards that will enable them to demonstrate what they can achieve. This means that not all students in a class need to be entered into the same combination of standards. Students may be involved in the learning without undertaking the assessment. The school is encouraged to review again what constitutes an adequate assessment opportunity, discussing and supporting teachers to understand and follow this in terms of entries and withdrawals, and checking the appropriateness of entries and course design to ensure students are given a fair opportunity to achieve. If students do not have an adequate assessment opportunity they should be withdrawn from the standard.

Agreed action

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

- clarify the process of resubmission and align language with NZQA terminology
- ensure that students eligible to use special assessment conditions are identified and supported.

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)

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

- ensuring all assessment materials are critiqued prior to use
- staff reviewing standard clarifications, and using NZQA and school exemplars to support assessor judgements
- engaging with suitably qualified subject specialists from within and outside the school to verify samples of student work for every standard
- purposefully selecting samples of student work at grade boundaries for verification of assessor judgements
- documenting the internal moderation process, including noting verification discussion and decisions through the online internal moderation application
- monitoring of internal moderation through:
 - Heads of Faculty ensuring the completion of the process through the online application before results are sent to NZQA
 - the Principal's Nominee having full access to the internal moderation application and supporting this with visits to subject areas to discuss the actual process and reinforce effective practice.

Fairfield College has effective processes and procedures for managing external moderation by:

- encouraging teachers to request appropriate standards for inclusion in the moderation plan
- selecting samples of student work randomly to NZQA requirements
- ensuring samples of student work are provided by being clearly labelled and stored in a central faculty area accessible by the Head of Faculty and Principal's Nominee
- using a response form to document and monitor completion of actions undertaken to address issues identified in external moderation reports
- having the Principal's Nominee overseeing the process for both Industry Training Organisation and NZQA moderation.

Online internal moderation tool utilised Since the previous Managing National Assessment visit, the school has moved to an online internal moderation application. This has strengthened internal moderation practice within the school as it provides a means to record all aspects of the process in a consistent and transparent way. It enables monitoring of completion by Heads of Faculty and oversight by the Principal's Nominee. Outside verifiers can log on and record their results and comments. Teachers interviewed understood the purpose of internal moderation and discussed their effective practice.

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)

Fairfield College effectively uses assessment-related data to support achievement outcomes for students by:

- tracking student achievement including using grade predictions to monitor student progress toward NCEA qualifications and support students identified at risk of not achieving their chosen assessment pathway
- subject teachers reviewing data to inform decisions about future course content and design
- Heads of Faculty completing an NCEA analysis review to assist in setting achievement improvement targets for the year ahead

Fairfield College reports accurate achievement data by:

- having a delegated staff member, working with the Principal's Nominee who submits results to NZQA on a timely and regular basis
- using the Key Indicators to identify and resolve data submission errors
- ensuring all internal entries are reported with a result
- using the correct provider code for assessment undertaken by external providers
- checking entries and results including:
 - students and teachers confirming entries in externally assessed standards prior to 1 September data file submission
 - teachers reconciling their mark book printout with results reported on NZQA Provider Login prior to 1 December data file submission.

Encourage use of full achievement standard number The use of the abbreviation code for achievement standards is common practice with teachers and students interviewed. The school is encouraged to use the full '90000' number and title as this will assist students to search and locate support material available online and support ensuring accurate entry data which is particularly important with external standards.

For consideration

To extend good practice in managing and making use of assessment-related data, the school is encouraged to consider:

- using the full standard number and title rather than the abbreviation.

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))

Fairfield College has effective processes and procedures for:

- communicating assessment information to students and parents using a range of methods and media including:
 - the school website and student management system portal
 - a newly developed school app
 - the school signage board
 - Māori and Pasifika Achievement evenings
- ensuring students receive information outlines for all courses they undertake
- ensuring a memorandum of understanding is held for all outside providers through a centralised process signed off by the Principal's Nominee.

Fairfield College assists common understanding of assessment practice by:

- annually updating the Staff Handbook and including information from the Managing National Assessment seminar to highlight and align with NZQA areas of focus
- supporting teachers new to the school to understand assessment procedures
- the Principal's Nominee meeting with senior and middle management early in the year to reinforce key messages and expectations
- informing teachers about assessment best practice and providing opportunities to discuss changes.

Consider the language level of student handbook The senior student handbook has a readability more suited to teachers. Adjusting the language of the handbook may assist in making the document more user friendly for the intended audience.

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:

- reviewing the level of language in the handbook provided for students.