

Managing National Assessment Report

Hamilton Girls' High School

July 2018

What this report is about

This report summarises NZQA's review of how effectively Hamilton Girls' 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 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
- *Hamilton Girls' High School Assessment Guide Teachers' Guide 2018*
- *Hamilton Girls' High School Assessment Manual* (Supporting document of the Teachers Guide)
- *Hamilton Girls' High School NZQA Information and Assessment Procedures for Senior Students*
- *Hamilton Girls' High School Senior Curriculum Handbook 2018*
- *Hamilton Girls' High School Policy Manual*
- a sample of course outlines for Years 11, 12 and 13.

The School Relationship Manager met with the Deputy Principal – Assessment, Principal's Nominee, three students, Heads of Department for English, Music, and Social Studies and Teacher in Charge of Physics.

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

Hamilton Girls' High School

25 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 issues. Therefore, it is anticipated that the next Managing National Assessment review will be conducted within three years.

What the school is doing well

Hamilton Girls' High School has robust assessment and moderation processes for national qualifications. The leadership and experience of the Principal's Nominee is instrumental in the school maintaining credible assessment practices. He provides clear direction of assessment best practice, sets high expectations, and effectively manages change to support student achievement and improve current practice. The school acknowledges the importance of the Principal's Nominee role and supports him in this.

On-going self-review is a feature of the school. The Principal's Nominee, supported by the Deputy Principal Assessment, systematically review assessment practice and processes to ensure credible assessment for national qualifications. Updates are communicated to Heads of Department through regular Curriculum Leadership meetings. This forum allows for robust discussion and reflection leading to consistent understanding and application throughout the school. Heads of Department are responsible for assessment practice in their learning area. They review assessment processes with their staff and discuss these reviews with the Principal's Nominee to ensure that they meet the school's documented assessment expectations.

The school is currently undertaking a full review of its curriculum and course design to ensure they are meeting the needs of their students as they progress through and from school. It has identified for reflection and review aspects of some areas of curriculum and course design. These include the number of credits assessed, the relevance of existing courses, and prerequisites for further study.

Assessment procedures are clearly documented and consistently applied. Making use of naturally occurring evidence, engagement with digital trials and pilots, differentiation of programmes, adapting contexts and opportunities available through outside providers all assist to engage and meet the assessment needs of students.

Internal moderation is embedded practice with staff documenting their discussions around borderline examples of student work. The introduction of an online *Internal Moderation Cover Sheet* is assisting staff and senior management to access and monitor the process. Where inconsistency, low agreement rates or issues are identified in external moderation reports, a robust follow-up reflects on the effectiveness of the internal moderation process previously undertaken. This supports ownership of the process and is reflected in the ongoing high agreement rate.

Student data is effectively managed. This ensures accurate results are submitted to NZQA in a timely manner and any issues are identified and efficiently resolved. Achievement data is used to monitor student progress, identify those at risk of not reaching their assessment goals, to review the effectiveness of courses and guide the structure of future programmes.

Effective and accessible communication supports consistent understanding and application of assessment procedures and processes. Information is presented regularly to staff, students and families through a variety of means. The Principal's Nominee has identified ways to further streamline staff documentation to make it succinct and user friendly.

Assessment practices in the senior school are effectively managed by the Principal's Nominee. Staff were united in acknowledgement of his approachability, leadership and role in ensuring clear messages and robust processes. He is supported in his work by the Principal and Senior Management Team who work collaboratively to support and encourage student success.

Areas for improvement

The review identified that resubmission requirements were not being applied appropriately in one area.

Agreed action

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

- reinforce resubmission requirements with staff to clarify understanding.

Kay Wilson
Manager
School Quality Assurance and Liaison

30 October 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 17 October 2014 Managing National Assessment Report

The report noted four action items that have all been addressed. The school agreed to:

- ensure that all courses provide students with a fair and consistent opportunity for them to resubmit their work
- consider the effectiveness and efficiency of further extending student access to course and standards through a local tertiary provider
- encourage departments to periodically engage colleagues in other schools to verify a sample of marked student work if they are not already doing so
- consider how it can progressively increase the proportion of work that is electronically submitted for external moderation.

The Principal's Nominee and Curriculum Leadership team used these items as a basis for review, development and discussion to encourage better practices throughout the school.

Response to external moderation outcomes Hamilton Girls' High School has effective processes and procedures for responding to external moderation outcomes through:

- staff completing an *External Moderation Feedback Form* documenting response findings for every standard that has been moderated
- the Principal's Nominee holding discussions with the relevant Head of Department or Teacher in Charge where there is a consistency issue or low agreement rate identified
- focusing the discussion on the internal moderation process previously undertaken to reflect on reasons why the issue had not been identified, including checking:
 - the appropriateness of the verifier to ensure they are a subject specialist
 - the relationship between assessor and verifier
 - purposeful and sufficient of selection of student work for internal moderation was undertaken
- co-constructing an action plan to address identified issues and improve processes and monitoring its completion.

Refocusing external moderation issues back to internal moderation has assisted staff to understand the role external moderation plays in reflecting the robustness and effectiveness of the internal moderation previously undertaken. This is good practice and reflects in ongoing high agreement rates.

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)

Regular and robust internal review Self-review focused on managing national assessment and ensuring credible results is ongoing and embedded practice. A school identified issue prompts an holistic analysis of the initial problem to ensure any related or contributing factors are also reviewed.

A recent example focused on processes relating to plagiarism and the authenticity of student work. The ensuing response and review encompassed aspects such as:

- redefining what is plagiarism within the school context including encompassing digital platforms
- the appeals procedures and revising the role of the Deputy Principal to ensure impartiality
- communication to students and parents through school notices, assemblies, fortnightly bulletins and term newsletters
- update of documentation to reflect changes.

The Principal's Nominee works closely with the Deputy Principal – Assessment to systematically review assessment practice and processes. Curriculum Leadership meetings are held about twice a term involving members of senior management, the Principal's Nominee and the Heads of Department. These meetings provide a forum for robust discussion, the resolution of any identified issues, and introduction of refinements to current practice. Heads of Department are responsible for assessment practice in their learning area and share updates, deadlines and reinforce processes. There is open and regular discussion with the Principal's Nominee to ensure teachers meet the school's documented assessment expectations.

The school effectively reviews and responds to areas externally identified for focus, such as through the Principal's Nominee seminar. In 2017, this seminar discussed processes relating to the use of outside providers particularly the management of memoranda of understanding. As a result, assessment documentation was updated and many of the Industry Training Organisation memoranda of understanding were modified.

Personal review around assessment procedures, practices and outcomes is evident through inquiry projects by staff and analysis of achievement data. It is noticeably demonstrated by the Principal's Nominee. He regularly communicates with NZQA to clarify understanding, share views and review both internal and external processes.

Recent internal focus has been on time management systems. The Principal's Nominee has introduced the use of a term white board to identify upcoming deadlines and pressure points. A self-reflection book enables timely recording of issues and problems as they occur and is a valuable annual reference. It includes discussion with, and other staff input such as Exam Centre Manager requests, or subject areas that had late result entries, promoting shared ownership throughout the school. This has assisted in review of systems, and improved future planning including:

- special assessment conditions rollovers, to ensure entitlements are confirmed before any internal assessments are undertaken

- collection of fees which is now better coordinated with the school's invoicing system
- checking of entries leading to the 1 September and 1 December date file submissions.

Future review The school is beginning a full review of its curriculum and assessment programmes to support on-going and future improvement of student achievement while ensuring credible assessment practices are maintained. Aspects of focus include:

- revising the number of credits offered to students both within a programme and overall
- reviewing the pre-requisites for courses
- evaluating current programmes offered to determine if they are still relevant and meeting the needs of students
- investigating further assessment opportunities offered by organisations outside the school
- reviewing the focus of STEM subjects within the school
- Heads of Department reviewing their curriculum handbooks
- keeping informed with outcomes of the current nationwide NCEA review and how this may impact the school.

These examples illustrate the school's capacity to effectively anticipate and identify issues, and to respond effectively to ensure student needs are met, and credible results are reported to NZQA. Robust discussions on assessment best practice, holistic self-review and strong leadership promotes school-wide ownership and consistency of effective NCEA assessment practice.

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)

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

- efficiently managing NZQA external examinations and reviewing practice to identify improvements
- engaging in external digital trials and pilots
- providing flexibility of topics and adapting contexts to meet the interests of students
- negotiating with students the standards to be undertaken in their assessment programme to reflect the student's abilities and interests
- extending the range of courses provided through engaging with outside providers
- providing students with choice in how they present evidence of assessment such as verbally, digital options and through naturally occurring evidence.

Hamilton Girls' High School has effective processes and procedures for:

- managing authenticity through a shared understanding of process and strategies for staff and students
- managing student appeals of assessment decisions and breaches of assessment rules
- reporting Not Achieved where a student has presented evidence that is not at the standard, or has had an adequate assessment opportunity and submitted no work
- managing assessment for students who are in Year 10
- assuring valid, verifiable and standard-specific evidence for derived and emergency grades
- meeting the requirements of the Privacy Act 1993.

Reinforce resubmission requirements The school is confident teachers understand and implement the correct procedures for resubmission. However, the review identified one subject area where the process requires further clarification. Resubmission should not be student driven, offered to all, or a planned part of the assessment process. It is teacher directed, and only offered to individual students who are on a grade boundary and can independently identify and correct the error or omission. The school has agreed to clarify the resubmission process with staff and has already accessed support material from the Principal's Nominee seminar and NZQA's resubmission *Mythbuster* to assist with this.

Review assessment programmes for students As part of its planned curriculum review, the school has identified the need to evaluate assessment programmes including further reducing credit limits in some courses and reviewing extension opportunities for students.

The school acknowledges assessing students against a large number of credits can impact both student and teacher workloads. Likewise, more assessment can be at the expense of the deeper learning needed for merit and excellence results. In 2017, 46 percent of the Year 11 students who had results reported to NZQA achieved over 120 credits. The percentage of students gaining over 90 credits in every level of NCEA is well above that of other schools and well in excess of what students need to achieve to gain a qualification.

Not every standard or topic in a course needs to be assessed. A course may be designed to include a mix of prescribed and optional standards with optional standards restricted to individual students to meet specific needs such as prerequisites or course endorsement. Rather than a subject area assessing Year 10 students in a one-off standard where they may only gain an Achieved result, extension may be better undertaken by broadening their learning and working towards developing a deeper understanding.

NZQA supports the school's planned review and discussion of assessment opportunities and processes, to better meet individual student need while ensuring they are manageable for both students and teachers.

Use school-based evidence to support special assessment conditions applications The school is encouraged to review processes relating to special assessment conditions including the use of school-based evidence to support future applications. In 2017, the school applied for special assessment conditions for three percent of its students and the majority of these applications used Level C assessor reports to substantiate needs.

The school uses a variety of means to identify need and promote special assessment conditions, including enrolment material, liaising with contributing schools, staff meetings and use of specialised teachers.

Agreed action

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

- reinforce resubmission requirements with staff to clarify understanding.

For consideration

To extend good practice in meeting student needs and supporting assessment practice, the school is encouraged to consider:

- reviewing the use of school-based evidence for special assessment condition applications.

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)

Hamilton Girls' High School has effective processes and procedures for managing internal moderation by:

- critiquing new and amended assessment activities before use, to ensure they are valid and fit for purpose
- engaging with suitably-qualified subject specialists from within and outside the school to verify samples of student work for every standard
- documenting the internal moderation process, including noting on an *Internal Moderation Cover Sheet* grade verification discussion around borderline pieces of work and grade decisions
- moving to an online *Internal Moderation Cover Sheet* that enables timely, anywhere access and monitoring by multiple staff
- monitoring the completion of the process by the Principal's Nominee viewing completed internal moderation cover sheets and undertaking physical checks to ensure the documented moderation process reflects actual practice.

Hamilton Girls' 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 available by being adequately stored and the Principal's Nominee knowing the location of the materials
- the Principal's Nominee managing all material and undertaking the submission process, ensuring accurate and consistent submissions
- increasing the percentage of material submitted electronically
- having consistent processes for both NZQA and ITO managed standards.

Request standards for moderation The online external moderation application enables schools to request standards for external moderation each year. To date, the school has only requested a small number. Encouraging staff to do this involves them in the process by allowing them to think strategically about the selection. Aspects that can be considered include:

- ensuring timely feedback for any standards with previously identified issues, to confirm the effectiveness of responses
- requesting additional feedback for standards to confirm internal moderation verification decisions, particularly for borderline decisions
- selecting current standards rather than those which may no longer be used
- planning to include all standards assessed over time.

Review teacher involvement in online external moderation processes The school is encouraged to review their external moderation process to allow teachers access to the online application so they can view, share and respond to reports, prepare appeals, request clarifications and select standards for moderation.

Delegating these parts of the moderation functionality to teachers will encourage greater ownership of the process and its outcomes and lessen the workload for the Principal's Nominee who currently undertakes this.

Continue to reinforce sufficiency and purposeful selection for verification

Further clarification and continued reinforcement of the underlying principles for purposeful and sufficient selection will confirm and support best practice. NZQA does not specify a fixed or pre-determined number of pieces of student work that must be verified. It recommends a sufficient sample of purposefully selected pieces of work is chosen. This sample will be determined by factors such as assessor experience, feedback from external moderation, the availability of good quality grade boundary exemplars, and number of students assessed. The student work selected for verification should always be purposefully selected. This means selecting examples at a grade boundary as well as any grades that need review.

The school requires a verification sample that is the greater of either the requirement for external moderation or ten percent of all students assessed against the standard. Although a school may require a specific number, they should consider that, in some circumstances, this may not be enough for a sufficient sample, or be more than is necessary, therefore increasing the workload for teachers and external verifiers. It may also mean that teachers focus on the number required rather than the rationale behind purposeful and sufficient selection.

Teachers interviewed discussed and shared evidence of effective internal moderation practices including selection of borderline samples.

For consideration

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

- encouraging more staff to request standards for external moderation
- encouraging teachers to undertake aspects of the online external moderation process.

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)

Hamilton Girls' High School effectively:

- **uses assessment-related data to support achievement outcomes for students by:**
 - using a 'traffic light' system to monitor student progress and identify those at risk of not achieving their assessment goals
 - evaluating the effectiveness of assessment programmes in meeting the needs of students, including targeted groups
 - encouraging critical inquiry to review aspects of course delivery and inform changes to standards and assessment programmes
 - analysing achievement by subject and standard, identifying trends and making comparisons with national data to help guide future practice
 - presenting an NCEA achievement report annually to the Principal that analyses and reflects on results and helps inform future course structures
- **reports accurate achievement data by:**
 - submitting results to NZQA on a regular basis
 - the timely management of assessment information for transferring students
 - the Principal's Nominee communicating key dates and deadlines to staff well in advance through varied and sometimes unique means
 - supporting eligible families to apply for financial assistance
 - ensuring all internal entries are reported with a result or withdrawn as appropriate
 - requiring teachers and students confirm external entries to ensure minimal late entry requests
 - supporting students to use their Learner login to track their NCEA progress and identify errors
 - using the correct provider code for assessment undertaken by external providers.

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))

Hamilton Girls' High School has effective processes and procedures for:

- ensuring students are provided with assessment information about each of their courses
- communicating assessment policy and procedures to staff, students and their families using a range of methods and media
- ensuring all memoranda of understanding are fit for purpose and held for all outside providers against whose codes results are reported
- ensuring timelines are communicated and deadlines met through prior and ongoing planning from the Principal's Nominee paired with regular reminders to staff, students and parents
- regularly reviewing the accuracy and relevance of all communications.

Hamilton Girls' High School assists common understanding of assessment practice by:

- assisting teachers new to the school to access and understand assessment procedures as part of the induction process
- facilitating shared ownership of assessment practice through NCEA discussions in meetings
- supporting teachers to understand and follow processes through regular updates and reminders
- helping students understand qualification requirements and school assessment procedures through regular updates in the daily notices, fortnightly bulletins, and newsletters
- ensuring relevant NZQA updates are circulated to teachers and discussed as necessary.

Communication review ensures accessible, consistent and current information

Effective communication of NCEA assessment procedures and processes is evident. Students interviewed clearly articulated the school assessment practices and what they need to gain a qualification. They indicated ready access to NCEA information via the Principal's Nominee, tutor and subject teachers and documentation.

The student and staff assessment procedures are regularly reviewed and revised to ensure they meet the needs of their intended audience. Curriculum Leadership meetings are integral in this review process ensuring clear and open communications are developed and communicated. A recent review saw changes being made to make information more user friendly and assessable by:

- setting the assessment procedures icon on the desktops of teacher's and student's computers
- adding links within the document from the contents page direct to the relevant section

- making use of hyperlinks to the NZQA website
- using students to feature in a video played to all tutor groups to promote procedures and links.

Staff information is contained in the Teachers' Guide. A complementary Assessment Manual duplicates much of the information and contains additional administrative procedures related directly to the information contained in the guide. The Principal's Nominee has noted having two documents is cumbersome and is now looking towards consolidating material into one publication and reducing the size of the document to make it concise, clearer for staff and more manageable.

Consider update to course information Course outlines identify all possible standards offered within a course along with their credit value. In some areas differentiated programmes involve a strategic selection of standards from within this suite based on student interests and abilities. This enables students to undertake personalised programmes. A statement outlining the proposed range or credit limit for a course will give students and parents greater clarity about the total credits assessed, enabling accurate calculation of a student's potential to gain an NCEA qualification. It may also support the move towards individualised programmes in other areas by encouraging optional standards whereby not all standards listed are assessed.

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:

- indicating in course material the proposed credit limit or range within the suite of possible standards for assessment.