

# Managing National Assessment Report

## Flaxmere College

June 2019

## What this report is about

This report summarises NZQA's review of how effectively Flaxmere 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
- *Flaxmere College Analysis of Variance 2018*
- *Flaxmere College Assessment Policy 2019*
- *Flaxmere Collaborative Data Analysis – Planning for Student Success in 2019*
- *Flaxmere College Course Confirmation Process 2019*
- *Flaxmere College Learning Area Quality Assurance Processes (2019)*
- *Flaxmere College Senior Course Booklet 2019*
- a sample of:
  - an Equity and Excellence Team Action Plan
  - minutes and actions arising from a Level 2 Tracking and Monitoring Meeting 2019
  - NCEA Achievement Progress documentation from 2018
  - subject specific Student Information Booklets 2019
  - Teacher Course Reflection document 2019
  - tracking documents using traffic light highlights to identify ‘at risk’ students across all levels.

The School Relationship Manager met with:

- The Principal
- Deputy Principal/Assessment Coordinator
- The Principal’s Nominee/Assistant Principal
- Leaders of Learning for:
  - English
  - Mathematics
  - Music/Performing Arts
  - Physical Education/health
  - Science
  - Social Sciences
- three students.

There was a report-back session with the Principal, Deputy 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

## Flaxmere College

20 June 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

In the past five years, Flaxmere College has raised its attainment rate above that of comparable schools. This success was recognised in 2018 when the college won the Supreme Award at the Prime Minister's Education Excellence Awards. The college has accelerated Māori student progress through its work with whānau and community. High expectations of staff and students are captured by the school motto, "Student Success is the Only Option" and are underpinned by the school's core value of whānaugatanga. In the words of the Principal, the staff at Flaxmere College "*work hard, deliberately and strategically*" to ensure the best possible outcomes for their students.

Through review, the Senior Leadership Team has created significant change to assessment-related practice to better meet the needs of students. Change to teaching practice and programmes is strongly data driven. Student support and academic counselling has improved outcomes for students through wider analysis of data and tracking by a supportive network of subject and mentor teachers, Heads of Year, the Equity and Excellence group, and a team of pastoral care specialists. In order to accelerate students' literacy and numeracy skills, Professional Learning and Development has focused on embedding culturally responsive practice and upskilling teachers' pedagogy. External facilitators coach and mentor staff in two learning areas with a focus on improving the teaching and learning of literacy and numeracy skills.

The school provides a broad range of programmes to cater for the varied pathways its students wish to follow. Assessment is differentiated in some subjects and includes a high degree of personalisation in others. Learning opportunities are contextualised and maximise cross-curricular links. Assessment dates are fluid and students are assessed when ready. External providers offer courses and standards the school does not have the capacity to deliver.

The Principal's Nominee effectively manages robust school-wide internal moderation processes, with a commitment to ensuring all results reported are credible. External moderation outcomes are addressed by Leaders of Learning preparing an action plan to resolve issues. Senior management monitors the completion of interventions.

Data analysis and use is a strength of the school, informing good practice and self-review for teachers, Leaders of Learning, senior management and the Board of Trustees. Procedures to monitor and track NCEA achievement progress for all students are thorough and effective, with early interventions improving student outcomes.

The school has a strong culture of meeting student needs and supporting students to achieve. Face-to-face communications with students and their whānau provide a better understanding of NCEA and school assessment procedures.

### **Areas for improvement**

There is a need to clarify the meaning of “adequate assessment opportunity” with all staff. In some learning areas, where a student has made little or no progress towards completing an assessment, students have been withdrawn, rather than report Not Achieved. However, where a student has started an assessment and been offered an adequate assessment opportunity, if their work does not meet the standard once it is submitted, then Not Achieved must be awarded.

### **Agreed action**

NZQA and senior management agree on the following action to ensure the consistency of assessment policy and procedures across the school. Senior management undertakes to:

- ensure all staff are aware of and follow the assessment rules on the reporting of Not Achieved grades.

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Manager  
School Quality Assurance and Liaison

15 August 2019

**NZQA**

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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 20 October 2016 Managing National Assessment Report** The college has addressed the four agreed actions from the 2016 review by:

- reviewing the use of school evidence to support applications for special assessment conditions
- using purposeful selection for internal moderation based on assessor experience with the standard
- managing to reduce the number of late entries
- ensuring most internal entries have a result or are withdrawn by 1 December.

**Applications for Special Assessment Conditions Strengthened** Following the 2016 Managing National Assessment review, the Senior Leadership Team reviewed the school's practices and procedures around applications for special assessment conditions. Since the review, a Leader of Learning for Learning Support has been appointed and has attended NZQA training for special assessment conditions co-ordinators, as well as the meetings of her local cluster group. At the time of this review, there were very few students eligible for special assessment conditions and no applications based on school evidence. The Leader of Learning for Learning Support and the Senior Leadership Team are confident they can identify students eligible for special assessment conditions for sensory, physical or medical needs and can demonstrate that the school's own interventions have successfully reduced disparities for high priority learners.

**Response to external moderation outcomes** The school has effective procedures for internal moderation as evidenced by the school's high agreement rate. Leaders of Learning complete a *Response to External Moderation Report* form when they receive reports on their external moderation and are required to develop action plans for any issues identified in NZQA's reports. The Deputy Principal collects the forms, which become part of the annual Learning Area Report. The Deputy Principal checks the actions are completed in a timely manner and provides feedback and/or further support where necessary.

### 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)*

Embedding culturally responsive practice across the school has been one of the key determiners of success for Flaxmere College. Progress for Māori has been accelerated and rates of attainment are now above those of comparable schools. The initial review of teaching practice led ultimately to the implementation of *The Flaxmere Way*, a local variant of the Effective Teacher Profile. This has been

adopted by all staff and embedded into their practice to create a consistent, culturally responsive experience for the school's predominantly Māori and Pacific learners.

Creating stronger school-whānau partnerships has also been part of the school's internal review process. Whānau Learning Conferences involving students, parents and kaiako take place twice a year, creating "*educationally powerful connections*" with students and their whānau. Students set goals, share progress and receive academic counselling with their whānau involved in the process. The strong sense of whānaungatanga in the school community is another key factor behind improvement in attendance and educational outcomes.

### **Raising student attainment through improved literacy and numeracy skills**

Flaxmere College has identified improved literacy and numeracy as key to improving rates of student attainment. Fifty percent of students are transient and/or below the expected curriculum level when they first enrol. Despite this, the college has enabled the majority of learners to complete their Level 1 qualification after they enter Year 11. The school's review of its own data reports a 26.2% improvement in literacy since 2017 and Level 1 attainment above the rates of similar decile schools.

### **Improving literacy and numeracy teaching strategies key to student success**

From 2016-2018, all staff received Professional Learning and Development to raise their capacity as teachers of reading literacy skills. The college Equity and Excellence team tracks student progress towards achieving Level 1 literacy and numeracy requirements, identifying students 'at risk' and providing next steps for success. Through the spiral of inquiry process, teachers have developed their literacy teaching pedagogy and are able to track and report on reading progress in their classes.

Outside experts have been retained to provide specialist support for the teaching of literacy and numeracy. Since 2017, a University facilitator has worked with the Science Learning Area to improve subject-related literacy in this subject. Another outside expert has worked with teachers to improve numeracy skills in the Mathematics learning area. All courses and teaching programmes have been adapted to meet the literacy needs of the students and data is being gathered through class, course and Learning Area review to evaluate the effectiveness of these new initiatives. Students who cannot meet the minimum requirements for NCEA currently complete a National Certificate in Community and Work Skills. These will be replaced by New Zealand Certificates at the end of 2019 and the school will explore suitable programmes for identified learners.

### **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)*

### **Flaxmere College has effective processes and procedures for meeting the assessment needs of its students by:**

- offering highly individualised personal programmes of study which create pathways for future vocational and/or academic success
- differentiating assessment and tailoring assessment opportunities to suit individuals within a course and assessing students when they are ready
- using data in a live spreadsheet to identify student progress and those 'at risk' by allowing real time adjustments and interventions to students' NCEA plans
- having Heads of Year ensure that students' courses are linked to meaningful pathways
- extending vocational and alternative pathways through Gateway, the Primary Industry Academy, the Services Academy, STAR, Trades and other courses provided through the Eastern Institute of Technology.

### **Flaxmere College has effective processes and procedures for:**

- monitoring the authenticity of student work during the assessment and marking process
- managing missed and late assessment, appeals and breaches of the assessment rules
- providing valid resubmission opportunities
- ensuring evidence for derived grades is standard specific and verified
- meeting the requirements of the *Privacy Act 1993*.

**Contextualised and relevant student-centred learning opportunities** Student engagement has been strengthened through contextualised and cross-curricular learning and assessment opportunities that provide meaningful, relevant links to students' interests and aspirations. Opportunities for assessment through Whakairo, Mau Rākau and Te Ao Hurihuri have been enhanced, in response to the cultural needs of Māori students in the school. Longer teaching spells of 100 minutes facilitate cross-curricular and contextualised learning and allow time for activities outside the classroom. Improved rates of attainment can be linked to culturally responsive classroom practice, high rates of student attendance and improved student engagement.

**Addressing equity through Māori and Pacific People's engagement and success in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) subjects** The school's review of achievement data provides evidence of improvements in the number of Maori and Pacific students taking one Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) subject in Year 13 between 2017 and 2018. The percentage increase for Māori was from 4.2 percent to 17.6 percent, and for Pacific students the increase rose from 0 to 29.4 percent over the same period. Some of the improvement can be attributed to improvements in the teaching of subject-specific literacy skills. A Science focused Professional Learning Group



meets weekly to inquire into improvements in Science capability in the junior school and improvements in the Science capabilities of these students have been captured in New Zealand Council for Educational Research testing data.

**Clarify teachers' understanding of reporting Not Achieved** Interviews with staff found some inconsistency in the practice around the reporting of Not Achieved grades. Two of the Learning Areas interviewed reported withdrawing a student if their assessment, once started, was *“not markable.”* However, the assessment rules state that a *“Not Achieved grade must be recorded for a student who has had an adequate opportunity to be assessed but has failed to avail themselves of this opportunity.”* Whether a student has had an “adequate assessment opportunity” is the key issue. If a student is not ready for an assessment, it is best deferred, which is a strategy commonly used in the school. However, once the assessment is underway, a student must have Not Achieved reported if they do not complete the assessment and/or do not meet 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:

- ensure all staff are aware of and follow the assessment rules on the reporting of Not Achieved grades.

## 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)*

### **Flaxmere College has effective processes and procedures for managing internal moderation by:**

- ensuring all assessment materials are critiqued prior to use to ensure they are valid and fit for purpose
- using subject-specialists from within or outside the school to verify assessor judgements for a sample of student work
- fostering networks for single subject teachers so they can have their judgements externally verified
- monitoring internal assessment by collecting all completed *Internal Moderation Cover Sheets* and tracking completion of the moderation process
- clarifying with staff that evidence needs to be “purposefully selected” at grade boundaries and what NZQA requires in terms of “sufficiency”
- carrying out an annual review and “mini audits” of moderation practice and processes within each Learning Area to check that documentation can be reconciled with practice
- keeping benchmark exemplars and verification notes to inform future assessment decisions.

### **Flaxmere College has effective processes and procedures for managing external moderation by:**

- selecting samples of student work for external moderation to NZQA requirements
- monitoring external moderation feedback and agreement rates to identify trends and potential issues in a subject area
- analysing external moderation history to identify trends and Learning Areas that need extra support and attention
- providing professional support with marking and moderation for targeted Learning Areas
- requiring all Leaders of Learning to store internal assessment evidence in a consistent digital or physical format for external moderation
- encouraging and supporting staff to upload their documents digitally through the External Moderation application.

### **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)*

### **Flaxmere College effectively uses assessment-related data to support achievement outcomes for students by:**

- analysing NCEA results to identify areas of strength, weakness and next steps for the school
- compiling an analysis of variance each year which measures performance against strategic goals and annual targets
- reporting to the Principal and Board of Trustees on academic progress, teaching and learning, and assessment in Learning Area annual reports, and reviewing Learning Area goals using a formal internal evaluation process
- using a multi-pronged approach to analyse student progress and those at risk through the class teacher each term, tracking throughout the year by the Equity and Excellence team and monitoring by senior management and Heads of Year
- analysing mid-year literacy and numeracy data to monitor progress and determine academic next steps.

### **Flaxmere College reports accurate achievement data by:**

- reporting of entries and results to NZQA in a timely manner
- using Key Indicators to identify and resolve data errors
- reducing late entries for external examinations
- requiring students, teachers and faculty leaders to check the accuracy of entries and reported results
- holding current memoranda of understanding with external providers and reconciling them with entries.

### **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))*

### **Flaxmere College has effective processes and procedures for:**

- ensuring students receive outlines in a consistent format for all courses they undertake
- providing a Senior Course Booklet to students and whānau when making course selections
- communicating important updates on NCEA and related matters to whānau through email, in response to more families having email access at home
- communicating assessment policy and procedure to students in a simple, condensed format
- using twice yearly Whānau Learning Conferences as an additional means of disseminating NCEA information relevant to individual students
- contacting parents/caregivers if a student absent as the school has identified monitoring absence as a key determiner of student success
- inducting new staff to familiarise them with the school's expectations for assessment and moderation processes.

### **Flaxmere College assists common understanding of assessment practice by:**

- providing opportunities for staff to discuss changes to assessment best practice, including findings from external review
- sharing NZQA and school assessment related processes at meetings with whānau and through updates by email, newsletter and/or social media
- reporting student progress to whānau four times during the year.

**Ensure documentation regarding Appeals is consistent** Staff and student assessment documentation differs in relation to the length of time available for making an Appeal. All documentation should be aligned to provide clarity and avoid misunderstanding.

### **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 staff and student handbooks so they provide current and accurate information on the length of time available for an Appeal.