

# Managing National Assessment Report

## Hillcrest High School

June 2019

## What this report is about

This report summarises NZQA's review of how effectively Hillcrest 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
- *Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Policy*
- *Hillcrest High School National Qualifications Procedures (Staff Handbook)*
- *National Certificate of Educational Achievement: Levels One, Two and Three and Scholarship 2019 Hillcrest High School Information for Parents and Students*
- a sample of course outlines for Years 11, 12 and 13.

The School Relationship Manager met with:

- the Principal's Nominee
- Head of Faculty for Social Science
- Assistant Head of Faculty for Physical Education
- Heads of Department for:
  - Music
  - Senior Science
- 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

## Hillcrest High School

28 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.

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

### **What the school is doing well**

Hillcrest High School is committed to providing opportunities for students to engage in meaningful learning pathways and to attain qualifications that will prepare them for life beyond school. The school has in place processes that allows for the effective management of assessment for national qualifications and ensures credible results are reported.

A variety of assessment approaches such as differentiated programmes, flexible timeframes and using relevant contexts for assessment help engage students. Staff have a consistent understanding of the requirements and application of assessment procedures.

Internal moderation is used to support assessor judgement through the use of strategic selection and subject specialist verifiers. This helps confirm that results awarded are consistent with the standard. Heads of Department and Heads of Faculties confirm that internal moderation has been undertaken for every standard where results are reported to NZQA. The Principal's Nominee reconciles practice through conversations with teachers to ensure consistent and effective practice. External moderation provides further feedback for teachers and confirms internal moderation processes are robust.

Data is analysed to identify students at risk of not achieving a qualification and support interventions. The school is aware of inequalities in achievement between some groups within the school population and addressing this is a focus. Teachers review, adapt and introduce programmes in response to their own analysis of achievement outcomes and feedback from students.

Assessment practices are communicated effectively both formally and informally. An open and transparent atmosphere and the collegiality of staff supports review of systems, processes and outcomes. Teachers recognise the experience and accessibility of the Principal's Nominee and his role in leading and supporting effective processes for managing national assessment. Students have agency to monitor their own progress and are confident to seek help when needed.

### **Areas for improvement**

There are no agreed action items. Some next steps for the school to consider are detailed in the body of the report.

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6 November 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 13 August 2015 Managing National Assessment Report** The 2015 report identified a significant issue. The school's senior management was required to monitor the completion of internal moderation. A check was undertaken in 2016. At that time the Principal's Nominee had implemented an attestation for teachers to confirm that internal moderation had been completed for every standard where results had been reported to NZQA. This was supported by regular communication with Heads of Faculty, clarification with staff and spot checks of faculties.

This review found the significant issue has been addressed and resolved. The monitoring of internal moderation is discussed further in the moderation section of this report.

**Response to external moderation outcomes** Staff review and respond to feedback from external moderation reports. Where inconsistencies or issues are identified by the moderator, the Principal's Nominee meets with relevant teachers, and the Head of Faculty, if appropriate, to discuss actions needed to address the concerns. A record is kept of these conversations and the planned outcomes, so they can be monitored for successful completion. The high consistency between assessor judgements and NZQA's moderators reflects effective external moderation follow up and robust internal moderation processes.

### 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 reviews teaching, learning and assessment practice to ensure it best meets the needs of students and provides opportunities to support students to present their best evidence of achievement.

Open conversation continues to be a feature of the school. Review of assessment processes is facilitated through both informal and formal processes which ensures it is embedded and ongoing. This is used to confirm assessment quality and identify areas of potential risk or inconsistent teacher practice so that changes can be made.

The Principal's Nominee leads managing national assessment discussion through forums such as Board of Studies and Heads of Faculty meetings. Recent areas of discussion include:

- clarifying the use of resubmissions and their application, with a particular focus on managing assessments over a longer time period by introducing checkpoints and milestones

- developing a greater learning focus through project-based and contextualised learning where assessment is the product of learning rather than the main driver
- investigating further ways to track and monitor students who are at risk of not achieving as well as those exceeding expectations, to ensure opportunities are available for support and extension
- reviewing processes for monitoring completion of internal moderation
- encouraging all teachers to access NZQA data online through the school's Provider Login
- reinforcing, clarifying and discussing updates to assessment processes and staff and student information.

Data is used throughout the school to support review. In addition, teachers regularly use student voice to assist them in evaluating courses. This can inform changes to programmes, contexts and standards. The regular, responsive and proactive review indicates that the school has the capacity to effectively manage its NCEA assessment practices.

**No action required**

No issues with the school's response to NZQA external reviews and 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)*

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

- ensuring credible assessment through consistent school-wide assessment practices
- providing students with the opportunity to design an individual assessment programme by selecting from a menu of standards and having flexibility with the timing of assessments
- assisting with the efficient management of NZQA external examinations and reviewing practice to identify improvements
- collecting evidence of student achievement using a range of methods including from portfolios, digital evidence, oral conferencing and performances
- adapting assessments to make use of project-based learning, local learning contexts and real-life situations
- engaging with outside providers to offer a wide range of vocational and trade-based courses
- providing a range of opportunities to meet the abilities and needs of all students through differentiated programmes including:
  - dedicated scholarship classes
  - opportunities for multi-level study
  - foundation classes to assist second language learners
  - a boys-only study class, developed to raise the achievement rate of boys in NCEA.

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

- encouraging the use of checkpoints and milestones particularly in portfolio type assessments to support students in reaching the standard
- reducing workloads for teachers and students by limiting further assessment opportunities
- monitoring the authenticity of student work submitted for assessment by using suitable strategies during the assessment and marking process
- meeting the requirements of the Privacy Act 1993.

**Encourage the use of more school evidence for special assessment conditions applications** The school identifies and makes applications for eligible students to use special assessment conditions. To date, evidence for the majority of applications has come from professional reports. The school is moving to increase the use of school-based evidence by promoting and communicating this option to teachers and parents. The school acknowledges these can alleviate potential financial and availability barriers.



**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)*

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

- providing teachers with clear step-by-step guidelines of the school's internal moderation expectations
- ensuring all assessment materials are critiqued prior to use
- using suitable subject specialists from within and outside the school to verify assessor judgements
- teachers understanding the reason for internal moderation, and strategically and purposefully selecting a sufficient sample of student work for grade verification
- teachers documenting the internal moderation process.

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

- encouraging teachers to suggest appropriate standards to be considered for inclusion in the moderation plan
- negotiating appropriate changes to the moderation plan
- selecting samples of student work randomly to NZQA requirements
- ensuring samples of student work are provided by being adequately stored
- encouraging teachers to submit material digitally
- reflecting on external moderation feedback to inform changes to assessment tasks and grade decisions
- ensuring teachers are aware of the appeal and query functions available
- meeting the moderation requirements of industry training organisations.

**Strengthened monitoring of internal moderation** Since the last Managing National Assessment review in 2015 and the follow up visit of 2016, the Principal's Nominee has continued to review monitoring systems to ensure they not only meet NZQA requirements but are manageable and confirm effective processes are undertaken.

The attestation check sheet that was introduced following the 2015 report, while useful in its role to reinforce and clarify expectations with staff, was cumbersome and essentially a compliance exercise. A new process to confirm completion of internal moderation has since been implemented and is managed by all Heads of Department within each faculty. This means the Principal's Nominee is now able to focus on ensuring that practice is effective. This occurs through regular and open conversation held with teachers throughout the year. These are recorded to ensure that all curriculum areas are covered over the course of the year and if necessary, a note is kept of any follow-up actions that may be required.

Expectations for internal moderation are regularly shared with Heads of Faculty and staff. The school acknowledges that it is only through one on one conversations that reconcile the sign off sheet with actual practice that senior management can be confident that internal moderation practices are robust. This reinforces the importance of ongoing dialogue.

### **Review relevance of documented evidence for internal moderation**

Documenting the internal moderation process is a requirement for schools to provide evidence that internal moderation has taken place for all standards where results are reported to NZQA. The evidence also serves as a useful record for future reference as it should capture the reasons for assessors' and verifiers' decisions on the grades awarded. The school requires teachers to use an *Internal Moderation Cover Sheet* for this purpose.

This review sighted examples of internal moderation cover sheets where teachers had transferred information that did not relate to the process they described. This meant extra work for teachers and bore little usefulness for monitoring by the Principal's Nominee or future reference for the teacher. The school is encouraged to review with staff documentation expectations for internal moderation.

### **.For consideration**

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

- clarifying documentation expectations for internal moderation.

## 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)*

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

- identifying students at risk of not reaching their chosen assessment pathway and sharing information with key staff such as form teachers and Heads of Faculty to enable targeted intervention and support
- using statistical reports and analysing results to inform decisions about future course content and design
- using data to inform and support academic conversations with students.

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

- submitting results to NZQA on a timely and regular basis
- using NZQA Key Indicators, summary reports and standards search to check and monitor the accuracy of entries and results
- using the correct provider code to report results for assessment undertaken by external providers with whom the school holds a current Memorandum of Understanding
- ensuring all internal entries are reported with a result or withdrawn as appropriate
- checking entries in externally assessed standards to limit late entries and ensure accuracy.

**Addressing equity for Māori and Pacific students** The 2018 Education Review Office report noted disparity between Māori and Pākeha achievement rates in Level 1 and 2. The school has also analysed its 2019 achievement data and the inequity in outcomes between Māori, Pacific and other students, including in Level 3 STEM subjects.

A number of strategies have been introduced in response, with the aim of improving outcomes for Māori and Pacific students, including in STEM subjects. These include:

- appointment of a Māori and Pacific student coordinator to focus on improving achievement results for targeted students
- data analysis and reporting in all subject areas to include identifying achievement of targeted groups
- introduction of new courses including STEM focused subjects
- identifying opportunities in the junior school such as developing and implementing programmes to encourage students.

### **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))*

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

- annually reviewing the accuracy and relevance of information provided to teachers and students
- ensuring that students are provided with consistent assessment information about each of their courses
- encouraging students to register to use their NZQA Learner Login
- promoting the use of the NZQA Provider Login with teachers.

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

- providing a current hardcopy of handbooks to staff and students
- supporting teachers new to the school through induction and attendance at the *NZQA Teachers New to NCEA Seminar*
- using Board of Studies meetings to clarify changes to procedures, expectations and to facilitate discussion
- having regular and open communication with teachers through formal and informal means including Head of Faculty and staff meetings, emails and a learning management system
- providing access to assessment information in a central shared drive that is overseen by the Principal's Nominee.

**Review information on course outlines** The school provides a template for teachers to communicate assessment information for students in each of their courses. This ensures consistent information is presented to students.

The school is encouraged to consider including whether a course can be endorsed in the course outlines. One of the students interviewed confirmed that this information would have been useful when selecting courses for the following year, as their planned pathway recommended aiming for endorsement.

The option of using a course outline template available through the school's student management system, was discussed during the visit. This has the added advantage that course endorsement information can be automatically generated and better ensures accuracy of information for students.

### **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:

- including endorsement information on student course outlines.