

Managing National Assessment Report

Whakatane High School

March 2019

What this report is about

This report summarises NZQA's review of how effectively Whakatane 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
- Whakatane High School Assessment Policy 2017
- *Whakatane High School Assessment Policies and Procedures 2019* (Staff Handbook)
- *Whakatane High School Student Handbook - National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA)*
- a sample of course outlines for Years 11, 12 and 13.

The School Relationship Manager met with the:

- Principal's Nominee
- Deputy Principal – Curriculum
- Heads of Department for:
 - Art
 - Careers
 - English
 - Mathematics
 - Physical Education
 - Social Sciences
- three students.

There were report-back sessions with the Deputy Principal – Curriculum and Principal's Nominee at the end of the review visit, and later by phone the Principal, to highlight good practice and areas for improvement, with suggested strategies, next steps and to agree on any action required.

SUMMARY

Whakatane High School

13 March 2019

Consent to assess confirmed

This review found that the school is meeting the requirements of the *Consent to Assess Against Standards on the Directory of Assessment Standards Rules 2011*. No significant issues with the school's management of national assessment were found. The school's own review mechanisms allow them to identify and respond to most issues. Therefore, it is anticipated that the next Managing National Assessment review will be conducted within three years.

What the school is doing well

Whakatane High School is responsive to external review and has addressed all the agreed action items from the 2016 Managing National Assessment report. The school also demonstrates an increasing capacity to undertake its own review of the effectiveness of its assessment procedures and practice, leading to on-going improvements.

Student needs are met through a range of academic and vocational pathways and assessment opportunities are extended using external providers. Changes to programmes, including reducing the number of standards assessed, allow students to focus on the quality, rather than quantity, of their credits. Assessment processes are effectively managed within the school to ensure that results are credible and student rights are protected.

Internal moderation is an embedded process within the school and is effectively monitored by Heads of Department. External moderation is well managed and robust processes are in place to deal with issues identified.

Student assessment data is checked for accuracy and reported to meet key dates. Annual analysis of NCEA data enables the school and departments to set strategic academic goals and informs course and programme design.

School communication ensures information on qualifications and assessment procedures is appropriately provided to its community. The range of processes and formats used to distribute this information has enhanced the development of a shared understanding of the school processes and NCEA requirements. Staff are supported to develop a common understanding of best practice.

Areas for improvement

The school needs to ensure it can confirm the completion of all internal moderation prior its final data file submission. Previously the Principal's Nominee was able to do this because staff provided her with copies of all completed *Internal Moderation Cover Sheets*. While Heads of Department now monitor the completion within their departments, there is no process for them to confirm this to the Principal's Nominee prior to the submission of the end-of-year data file to NZQA.

There is a lack of consistency for some information between the staff and student assessment handbooks. As well, some of the information is missing or no longer current. An annual comparative review of the handbooks against each other and including links to the NZQA website would help keep them up-to-date and support consistent assessment school-wide.

Agreed action

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

- develop a process so senior management can confirm the completion of all internal moderation processes, prior to the school's final data file submission.
- review and update staff and student handbooks annually.

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3 May 2019

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FINDINGS OF THIS REVIEW

How effectively has the school responded to external and internal review?

External review

Evidence for external review actions having been appropriately and effectively addressed. (CAAS Guidelines 2.6iv, 3iv-3v)

Action Items from 19 March 2016 Managing National Assessment Report The school has addressed the agreed actions from the 2016 Managing National Assessment report:

- staff now purposefully select student work for moderation
- student work for external moderation is now selected randomly using the school's student management system
- the assessment handbooks were modified as suggested to align with practice
- standard version numbers and information on literacy and numeracy have been added to the course outline template.

Response to external moderation outcomes The Principal's Nominee has a robust process to follow-up on issues identified in external moderation reports. Staff formulate action plans and request support to address issues which are documented on a response form. The Principal's nominee monitors the actions, during annual department audits, to ensure completion. The school is considering adding an evaluation section to the form to allow staff to provide feedback on the effectiveness of any actions taken.

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)

Staff review of assessment programmes and student achievement are embedded processes informed by analysis of data from either NZQA or the school's student management system. These reviews inform decisions about the school's learning programmes, leading to the introduction of new courses or the modification of existing ones. The 2018 Education Review Office report noted that the school's "curriculum is increasingly responsive to the needs of all students".

A number of assessment processes were reviewed in 2018. These reviews occurred because of issues being identified. A next step the school could consider is scheduling regular review of all school assessment processes to ensure they are fit for purpose and understood by the staff using them.

Special Assessment Conditions A review of systems for special assessment conditions has led to the use of school-based evidence to support applications to NZQA. This process has led to better communications between the school and parents about student entitlements.

Monitoring of student achievement The school identified that delays in entering results meant that staff and whanau were having difficulty tracking academic achievement, leading to uncertainty about student progress. A target has been set in 2019 for students to gain 14 credits in each of their courses throughout the year. Heads of Departments are tasked with monitoring results entry and student progress. Where necessary, appropriate strategies can then be developed to assist students to meet the target. The school noted that this is a “work in progress” and too early to comment on the effectiveness of this monitoring in improving results entry.

The school has also changed how concerns about student progress are reported to parents, with both subject and form teachers now part of the process. The school expected that this, together with overall monitoring by the Senior Tutor, will ensure early identification of students not meeting set milestones, enabling appropriate solutions to be put in place to assist them.

External Moderation The external moderation response form has been reviewed and an expected completion date added. The Principal’s Nominee noted this allows her to better monitor progress on staff actions taken to address issues identified in moderation reports,

Staff involvement with the NZQA External Moderation Application has also been reviewed, and training provided on how to better use the App. The school would like staff to become more involved with the online submission process so that submissions will occur once all internal moderation processes are complete rather than being left until the November submission date.

For consideration

To extend good practice in external review and self-review of assessment, the school could consider:

- encouraging staff to evaluate the effectiveness of any actions taken in response to external moderation
- scheduling regular reviews of all school assessment processes to ensure they are fit for purpose and understood by the staff using them.

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)

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

- introducing new, and modifying existing, courses to improve student engagement and broaden the achievement pathways offered
- extending the range of vocational assessment opportunities available through the school's Star and Gateway programmes, and Trade Academies provided by local tertiary providers
- providing unit standard numeracy assessment opportunities to assist those needing support to meet NCEA numeracy requirements
- reducing the total credits available in courses to allow them to focus on the quality of their results, as evidenced by increasing certificate endorsement rates
- using a range of physical and digital methods to collect evidence of achievement during assessment
- ensuring staff are well informed of those with an entitlement to special assessment conditions and providing appropriate support.

Whakatane High School has effective processes and procedures for:

- managing missed and late assessments, further assessment opportunities and resubmissions, and student appeals of assessment decisions
- 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
- assisting students to present authentic work by using a range of suitable strategies during the assessment and marking process
- investigating and resolving potential breaches of assessment rules
- collecting credible evidence to support derived grade applications
- assisting with the management of the Examination Centre
- complying with the requirements of the Privacy Act, 1993 when handling students' assessment information.

Māori and Pasifika engagement and success in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) subjects The 2018 STEM Level 3 subject achievement data provided by NZQA has been shared with Heads of Department. At the time of this review no specific action has been taken in response to it. The school is, however, considering implementing a tracking system to monitor Year 12 Māori student STEM subject achievement.

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)

Whakatane High School has effective processes and procedures for managing internal moderation by:

- critiquing all assessment materials prior to use to ensure they are fit-for-purpose and provide students with the opportunity to present evidence at all grade levels
- teachers using exemplars and standard clarifications to inform their grade judgements during marking
- purposefully selecting samples of student work around grade boundaries for verification
- requiring staff to document the steps of their moderation processes on an *Internal Moderation Cover Sheet*
- using subject specialists from within, and outside of, the school to verify samples of student grades.

Whakatane High School has effective processes and procedures for managing external moderation by:

- selecting samples of student work for external moderation randomly to NZQA requirements
- providing staff with appropriate access to the NZQA External Moderation Application, enabling them to view reports and assist with the submission process
- requiring all external moderation, regardless of the standard-setting body, to follow the same process.

Focus on reducing workload by considering verification requirements for sufficiency Departments assure the quality of grades awarded by including work at grade boundaries when verifying assessor judgements. However most of those interviewed verify more samples of student work than this. The school should consider providing staff with further guidance on sufficient verification by the strategic selection of student work.

Strategic selection has the potential to reduce verifier workload, without compromising the quality of the assurance process. There is no fixed, or predetermined, number of pieces of student work that must be verified. The sample size 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.

Encourage staff to strategically request standards for external moderation In the last two years the school has not taken full advantage of NZQA processes that allow it to request standards for inclusion on its annual external moderation plan. Encouraging staff to request standards will allow them to think strategically and ensure that:

- standards identified with issues are re-moderated within an appropriate time
- teachers will receive feedback that will be useful for their assessment programmes.

Strengthening internal moderation monitoring processes The school's method of confirming the completion of all internal moderation processes by senior management before submitting results to NZQA should be strengthened to ensure all reported results are credible.

Whereas previously the Principal's Nominee received copies of all completed *Internal Moderation Cover Sheets*, Heads of Department now monitor the internal moderation processes within their departments. Some departments share the results of moderation processes digitally, but this is not a requirement, and while the Principal's Nominee checks on department processes through an annual audit, this may not happen until after the final data file submission.

The Principal's Nominee is reviewing how she can confirm the completion of all internal moderation processes. She is considering requesting an attestation from each Head of Department, prior to the final data file submission, that all department moderation processes have been finalised. If implemented, this would provide Senior Leaders with an assurance the school is meeting its reporting requirements.

Agreed action

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

- develop a process for senior management to confirm the completion of all internal moderation processes, prior to the school's final data file submission.

For consideration

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

- encouraging staff to strategically request standards for external 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)*

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

- staff analysing previous years' achievement data to inform current year course or programme design
- departments analysing NCEA data to report annually to the Principal and Board of Trustees, mapping trends in student achievement and identifying areas for development
- setting school wide and department academic goals based upon comparative analysis of achievement data
- encouraging students to monitor their progress towards qualification requirements and meeting other academic goals such as certificate or course endorsements through their Learner Login.

Whakatane High School reports accurate achievement data by:

- regular and timely reporting of results to NZQA
- checking for, and correcting where necessary, errors shown up by the Key Indicators and data file submission reports from NZQA
- removing, where appropriate, internal entries of students who have left or changed assessment programmes, to ensure all entries have a reported result
- having students take ownership of their results by confirming the accuracy of their grades
- submitting fees paid and financial assistance applications on time
- reporting results for standards the school has consent for, or against the correct provider codes of outside providers with whom the school holds current memoranda of understanding.

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))

Whakatane High School has effective processes and procedures for:

- providing students with information on the standards assessed within courses
- ensuring students receive appropriate information to help them understand what they need to achieve to gain a qualification
- communicating information on qualifications, and assessment policies and procedures to the school community through a range of digital and physical formats, as well as face-to-face meetings
- giving students, and their parents, access to achievement data held on the school's student management system through an online portal so they can track academic progress.

Whakatane High School assists common understanding of assessment practice by:

- sharing the staff assessment handbook digitally for easy accessibility
- the Principal's Nominee explaining NCEA requirements and school assessment processes to students during assemblies
- providing teachers with information about assessment best practice and giving them opportunities to discuss changes in school or NZQA requirements at staff, department and Heads of Department meetings.

Review staff and student handbooks annually To ensure consistency and that the assessment information in the staff and student handbooks remains current, they should be reviewed and updated annually. Examples of changes that could be included in the next review of the handbooks include:

- providing staff with guidance on sufficient verification by the strategic selection of student work
- ensuring consistent information is provided on the time for lodging an appeal of assessment decisions
- informing students of their rights under the *Privacy Act, 1993* to have their assessment information kept secure, and under the *Copyright Act, 1994* to determine if examples of their work can be shared with other students
- including links to relevant pages of the NZQA website to ensure users have access to current information.

Improve access to the student handbook The school could consider making a digital copy of the student handbook available to whānau to improve access to the information on school and NZQA assessment processes. A digital copy would enable the insertion of links to useful information, such as the availability of financial assistance forms, fees, special assessment conditions and derived grade applications.

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:

- review and update staff and student handbooks annually.

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:

- providing a digital copy of the student handbook to improve accessibility for students and their families.