

# **Managing National Assessment Report**

## **Western Heights High School**

**June 2021**

## What this report is about

This report summarises NZQA's review of how effectively Western Heights 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 2021* (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
- Western Heights High School *Curriculum Handbook 2021 Year 13*
- Western Heights High School *course outlines*
- Western Heights High School *NZQA Assessment Policies 2021*
- 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 Faculty/Department for:
  - English
  - French
  - History
  - Music
  - Physical Education
  - Science
- 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

## Western Heights High School

10 June 2021

### 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 2020 due to the impacts of the COVID pandemic.

### What the school is doing well

Western Heights High School provides students with access to a wide range of academic and vocational learning and assessment opportunities, to help meet their academic needs and to prepare them to achieve their qualification goals.

Heads of Faculty have started to manage assessment and moderation processes more effectively and are supported by a new Principal's Nominee. Teachers understand and follow school assessment requirements. Once the quality assurance processes are fully embedded, the school can be confident in its ability to provide credible assessment opportunities for all students.

The management of assessment data is becoming more efficient, ensuring results reported to NZQA are complete, timely and accurate. Student academic progress is monitored by the Principal's Nominee and Tutors. Interventions are initiated where students are identified as being at risk of not meeting qualification requirements. Staff, students and parents are kept well informed of individual progress towards qualifications by the Deputy Principal's traffic light system.

The school reviews how it communicates assessment information to its community. While communication is increasingly digital, senior leaders still value and encourage face-to-face meetings. Staff are kept informed of changes to NZQA requirements regularly by email from the Principal's Nominee.

The students interviewed for the review felt well informed about NCEA and supported by the teaching staff.

### Areas for improvement

The staff and student handbooks should be reviewed to ensure the information is current, aligns with best practice and consistent with the NZQA assessment requirements. This will help ensure the school's and NZQA assessment procedures are accessible and consistently applied.

Some other steps for the school to consider are detailed in the body of the report.

### **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 staff follow resubmission requirements
- strengthen staff practices for managing authenticity of student work
- checking that actions taken in response to external moderation outcomes are effective
- strengthen monitoring of internal moderation by reconciling documentation with actual practice so that the Principal's Nominee and Senior Leadership team can be confident that all standards assessed have been subject to internal moderation
- review both the Staff and Student handbooks to ensure information is current and fit for purpose.

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Wednesday, 11 August 2021

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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 29 September 2017 Managing National Assessment Report**

The agreed items from the 2017 Managing National Assessment review have been acknowledged by the new Principal's Nominee. Processes are being created to address these actions as ongoing opportunities to improve. The actions taken include:

- the new Principal's Nominee further strengthening the internal moderation monitoring system
- developing a more robust audit of departments as part of the school's monitoring process for internal moderation
- ensuring all student work for internal moderation is purposefully selected, and that verification discussion is documented
- adding a data checking process to reduce late entries for external examinations
- reconciling memoranda of understanding with results reported against external provider codes.

Updating of staff and student handbooks to reflect current practice and ensure consistent schoolwide assessment and moderation practice has not been fully resolved, as outlined in the relevant section of this report.

**Response to external moderation outcomes** The school introduced a new process to record staff feedback on external moderation this year, recognising that the previous system was not working as expected. This improved process should allow senior leaders to be confident that timely actions are taken to resolve issues raised by external moderation reports.

The Principal's Nominee works with staff in their curriculum area to unpack any issues identified in reports and record planned actions on an *External Moderation Response* form. A follow-up meeting with the staff and Principal's Nominee is held to confirm the actions and report back of completion timeline. However, as one Head of Faculty noted, there is no requirement for an evaluation of how effective the actions have been in addressing the issue. The school should consider adding this extra step to its process. It would also allow the Head of Faculty to consider if the standard should be included in its strategic selection of standards for future external moderation.

## **Internal review**

*Evidence for the school using its self-review and evaluation processes to identify areas for on-going improvement in assessment practice and procedures, which are then actioned. (CAAS Guidelines 3iv)*

The Principal's Nominee created a new review of assessment process at the beginning of 2021 to start to meet the agreed actions from the 2018 MNA report. Heads of Faculty interviewed discussed the newly implemented review processes within the school. Examples of recent improvements resulting from review included:

- creation of the Term 2 audit of assessment practice, to share models of best practice and disseminating these to all staff
- strengthening the follow-up of external moderation, after identifying this as an area of weakness
- requiring Heads of Faculty to annually analyse achievement data to align curriculum area goals and school targets.

The school has shown it has the capacity to effectively resolve issues as they arise or are identified by outside review. However, there is presently no regular, comprehensive review of school-wide assessment that could identify areas for ongoing improvement.

Developing systematic and sustainable review processes will help the school to identify their areas of strength and next steps more effectively, and to increase shared ownership for delivering quality assessment that supports good achievement outcomes for students. While review of assessment processes is starting to become common practice within the school, it may not always be coherent.

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.

## **Agreed action**

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

- develop a process to systematically and sustainably review assessment
- checking that actions taken in response to external moderation outcomes are effective.

## 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 2020 5.5)*

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

- faculties and staff in consultation with the Senior Leadership Team analysing previous years' achievement data to inform current year courses or programme design
- using a traffic light system to predict assessment outcomes to further support students reach their individual achievement goals
- implementing a faculty wide student achievement tracking system
- assessing students when ready.

### **Western Heights High School has effective processes and procedures for:**

- managing missed and late assessment
- investigating appeals
- meeting the requirements of the *Privacy Act 2020*.

**Ensure staff follow resubmission requirements** The school must ensure staff understand and follow resubmission requirements. A resubmission may be offered at the teacher's discretion where they judge a student has made a minor error or omission that they can identify and correct on their own. While the teachers interviewed showed a clear understanding of when a resubmission should be provided, the three students described situations where all students in a class were offered a resubmission. This does not meet NZQA requirements.

**Strengthen authenticity practices** The school should strengthen its policy and procedures on authenticity to ensure that assessment evidence is valid. Developing a range of protocols will help to assure senior managers that students are presenting authentic work. These include:

- students signing an authenticity form for every completed assessment task
- using milestones and check points in project work or research assessments
- knowing students and their abilities, based on previous results analysis.

It is important that teacher and student understanding of the school's policy is embedded in the assessment culture of the senior school. Updates to the authenticity policy in the NCEA staff handbooks, including new protocols, could be made after review, at the end of this year. These measures will give the school greater confidence that all stakeholders understand what is meant by 'authentic' in relation to national assessment and enhance the credibility of managing assessment for national qualifications at Western Heights High School.



**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 staff follow resubmission requirements
- strengthen staff practices for managing authenticity of student work.

## 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 2020 6.4b)*

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

- ensuring all assessment materials are critiqued prior to use
- using subject-specialists both internally and from outside the school to verify a sample of assessor judgements
- requiring teachers to submit the completed moderation cover sheets to the Principal's Nominee prior to reporting results to NZQA.

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

- ensuring samples of student work are adequately stored so that they are available
- purposefully selecting samples of student work around grade boundaries for verification.

**Strengthen monitoring of internal moderation** Internal moderation must be further strengthened by the Principal's Nominee reconciling *completed Internal Moderation Cover Sheets* with actual practice, to provide confidence that all reported results to NZQA have been quality assured. This check will help to embed staff ownership of assessment quality and provides a valuable opportunity for professional discussion on best practice.

### **Focus on reducing workload by considering sufficiency for grade verification**

The school should provide staff with further guidance on how they can strategically select student work to ensure their grade verification sample is sufficient to confirm that grades awarded are at the standard. Strategic selection can 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. Considering factors such as assessor experience, feedback from external moderation, the availability of good quality grade boundary exemplars, and number of students assessed, will help to determine sample size.

**Low rate of digital submission for external moderation** It is recommended that the school support teachers to submit work for external moderation digitally if it is produced digitally. Most students at Western Heights High School are completing work using digital tools. However, the school is currently printing most of the work out and submitting this physically, which is creating an unnecessary workload. Advantages of submitting work digitally for external moderation include a faster response from the moderator, less work for teachers and the Principal's Nominee, minimised risk of work being misplaced and easier access to appeals and queries.

**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:

- strengthen monitoring of internal moderation by reconciling documentation with actual practice so that the Principal's Nominee and Senior Leadership team can be confident that all standards assessed have been subject to internal moderation.

**For consideration**

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

- supporting teachers to verify grades on a strategic and sufficient sample of student work
- encouraging digital submission of student work 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)*

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

- setting strategic goals based upon analysis of achievement data
- Heads of Faculty and the Deputy Principal - Curriculum analysing NCEA data to report to the Board of Trustees on academic goals, trends in student achievement and areas for development in their respective curriculum areas.

### **Western Heights High School reports accurate achievement data by:**

- submitting results to NZQA on a timely and regular basis
- checking for, and correcting where necessary, data submission errors shown on the Key Indicators and data file submission reports from NZQA
- removing internal entries of students who have left the school or changed assessment programmes, to ensure all entries have a reported result
- reporting results for standards for which the school has consent to assess, or against the provider codes of outside providers with whom the school holds current memoranda of understanding.

**Encourage students to register and use their NZQA Learner Login** The school should consider how it can assist students to register for their Learner Login and provide them with advice on its use. While students can see their results through the online portal to the school's student management system, it is only through their Learner Login that they can:

- check the accuracy of their results reported to NZQA
- order copies of their qualification certificates
- request reviews or reconsiderations of external examination papers
- print an official copy of parts, or all, of their Record of Achievement.

In 2020 only 31 per cent of senior students registered for their NZQA Learner Login.

### **For consideration**

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

- assisting students to register and use their Learner login.

## 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))*

### **Western Heights High School has effective processes and procedures for:**

- communicating with parents of at-risk students to gain their support to assist students to reach their qualification goal
- informing students about suitable learning pathways and supporting them to achieve their planned pathway goal.

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

- the Principal's Nominee explaining NCEA requirements and school assessment processes at assemblies
- providing teachers with information about assessment best practice and giving them opportunities to discuss changes in school or NZQA requirements at staff, faculty and Heads of Faculty meetings
- ensuring students understand what they need to achieve to gain a qualification, through the student tracking system and traffic light system.

**Provide consistent course assessment information** Currently the assessment information in course outlines is presented in a variety of formats. Providing clear and consistent information in course outlines would ensure that students and parents have access to the same information across all subjects. The school should consider making similarly formatted information available to stakeholders, so assessment programmes are easier to understand and to inform subject selection.

**Student Handbook requires review** The Student Handbook needs to be rewritten to ensure that the level of detail is reflective of Western Heights High School's processes and the language used is accessible for students to understand.

### **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 the student handbook to ensure it is written in language appropriate to audience and reflects Western Heights High School context.

### **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:

- standardising the assessment information in course outlines.