

# Managing National Assessment Report

## Waitara High School

March 2018

## What this report is about

This report summarises NZQA's review of how effectively Waitara 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
- *Waitara High School NZQA Student Handbook - 2018*
- *Waitara High School NZQA Handbook – Procedures for 2018*
- a sample of course outlines for Years 11, 12 and 13.

The School Relationship Manager met with the Principal's Nominee, three students, and Leaders of Learning for Arts, English, Mathematics, Physical Education and Health, Science and Social Studies.

There was a report-back session with the Principal, Principal's Nominee and Deputy Principal Curriculum 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.

## **Back ground information**

The school has recently had a period of uncertainty in school leadership. A Limited Statutory Manager was appointed in December 2015 for Board functions including student achievement and curriculum management. An Acting Principal was in place for two terms in 2016 pending the appointment of a new Principal who took up the position at the start of 2017.

# SUMMARY

## Waitara High School

28 March 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 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

Waitara High School uses the flexibility of the NCEA model to offer personalised academic and vocational assessment programmes to support the future career aspirations of students. Assessing students when ready through relevant contexts and flexible timeframes is a developing feature of assessment practice.

Effective data analysis supports student achievement through identifying students at risk of not achieving a qualification and enabling targeted support and mentoring. Staff work collaboratively to support student achievement at a subject and qualification level, identifying ways to adapt and individualise assessment programmes to accelerate NCEA achievement.

A sound process is in place to document and monitor internal moderation. The Principal's Nominee meets annually with Leaders of Learning to evaluate their quality assurance processes and follow-up external moderation feedback.

Literacy and numeracy focussed classes assist students to meet the Level 1 NCEA qualification requirement. School-based evidence is used to support special assessment conditions applications to remove the potential financial barrier of a Level C Assessor Report.

The school's communication methods allow staff and students to understand NCEA and school assessment procedures. *Progress and Pathway* interviews with students, including monitoring student achievement goals, and regular progress reports home have been used to further support NCEA understanding with whānau.

### Areas for improvement

To manage internal moderation workload the school plans to clarify with staff that the student work for verification should be purposefully selected and sufficient to confirm assessment decisions are consistent with the standard. Purposeful selection will further support the development of teachers' understanding of grade boundaries.

While the number of internal entries made without a result reported has reduced, the school plans to strengthen checking to ensure that a result is reported for all internal entries or the entry is withdrawn if no assessment has taken place. A further reduction in this measure will fully address the action item in the 2015 review.

The school agreed to clarify correct resubmission practice with teachers as their understanding requires clarification and strengthening to ensure the practice meets NZQA expectations.

The use of a course outline template was recommended at the 2015 review to enable consistent assessment information to be provided to students and whānau. The school plans to use a standardised template that includes standards contributing to literacy and numeracy, and if the course is endorseable for all courses in 2019.

Additional information and refinements are required to the staff and student handbooks to clarify some assessment procedures. When the documents are updated for 2019 the school plans to incorporate the suggested changes.

### **Agreed action**

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

- clarify resubmission assessment opportunities with teachers and students
- clarify that student work for verification should be purposefully selected and sufficient
- ensure all internal entries have a result reported or are withdrawn if no assessment has taken place
- develop a course outline template to standardise information provided to students
- update the staff and student NCEA assessment information as outlined in the communication section of this report.

Kay Wilson  
Manager  
School Quality Assurance and Liaison

21 May 2018

**NZQA**

**0800 697 296**

**[www.nzqa.govt.nz](http://www.nzqa.govt.nz)**

# 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 12 June 2015 Managing National Assessment Report

There were seven agreed actions from the 2015 review report that would improve the quality of the school's assessment systems. Four have been fully completed.

The 2012 Managing National Assessment review identified the need for the school to:

- ensure that internal entries without a reported result were removed where the student had not had an adequate assessment opportunity
- consider the development of a templated course outline to ensure consistent information is published

The 2015 review identified that these action items were yet to be fully addressed.

The 2018 review identified that while progress has been made on reducing the number of internal entries without a result reported the school acknowledged further strengthening of checking processes prior to the 1 December file submission is required to reduce the number to an acceptable level. The requirement to develop a template to enable consistent course information to students and whānau has yet to be completed and is discussed further in the communication section.

**Response to external moderation outcomes** The school's procedure to follow-up external moderation was strengthened following the 2015 review to include a 'sign-off' that actions to address identified issues are completed. The school is aware of a low agreement rate between teachers and moderators in one subject area and is working with NZQA to provide confidence, to the school and NZQA, that assessment decisions are consistent with the standard.

### Internal review

*Evidence found that the school is effectively 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 5 December 2016 ERO Report identified that '*in 2015 retention in the senior school, NCEA and school leaver qualification data were all well below national figures and those for similar schools*'.

The new Senior Management Team is using the current strategic plan to inform a number of NCEA assessment changes. The strategic plan aims to improve student retention in the senior school, increase the number of school leavers with NCEA Level 2 and improve student NCEA achievement at all levels.

Changes made to support these objectives include:

- The introduction of semester courses including offering a choice of standards for students to plan their own assessment programme and an increase in vocationally focussed courses. It is hoped this approach will engage students in the ownership of their own learning and assessment programmes that reflect their ability, allowing them to follow their own interests and aspirations
- The school's system for tracking and monitoring student progress has been strengthened to include a "traffic light" system. At risk students are identified at a subject level, where teachers monitor and support students to gain 14 credits within the subject, and at the at a school level for the NCEA qualification. This change has facilitated early intervention for those identified as at-risk
- A "data wall" of student NCEA progress in the staffroom is used to support staff to have conversations with students on their progress, including congratulations, concerns and available assistance. Students confirmed the monitoring conversations and that they appreciated the affirmation of their progress
- Students are not given examination leave at the end of the year but are required to complete unfinished internal assessment. The school determines this change to be another factor contributing to improved NCEA student achievement
- Mentoring, Coaching Groups and *Progress and Pathway Interviews* are used to assist students to set future goals, plan their course of study, monitor progress, and to take greater responsibility for their NCEA progress. Regular credit progress reports are provided to students and parents to support on-going monitoring.

These changes are contributing to student achievement, for Level 1 and 2, improving to be above the national and decile roll-based statistics and provide evidence of the school's capacity to review the effectiveness of its assessment practice in meeting student needs and school achievement goals. The new Senior Management Team is developing a proactive review culture to ensure assessment quality and meeting of student needs.

### **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)*

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

- differentiating assessment programmes to enable students to undertake an assessment course that meets their needs, ability and future pathway including:
  - assessing students when ready through flexible timeframes
  - enabling students to choose their own context for an assessment activity
  - negotiating with students the standards to be undertaken in their assessment programme by offering a menu of standards
  - offering a range of vocational assessment programmes including Hospitality and Early Childhood Education
  - offering assessment programmes with fewer credits so students have the opportunity to “do less better”
- gathering achievement evidence from student activities outside of the classroom
- accelerating numeracy and literacy progress in Years 9 and 10 to enable students to better meet the NCEA requirements including offering specific literacy and numeracy assessment programmes.

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

- reporting Not Achieved for proven breaches of the rules and where students have had an adequate assessment opportunity but provide no work
- consistently managing missed and late assessment by the Leader of Learning being responsible for granting these
- using appropriate material for assessments that could potentially be used for a derived grade
- monitoring the authenticity of student work
- meeting the requirements of the *Privacy Act 1993*.

**Clarification of resubmission opportunities is required** Inconsistent resubmission practice was described by teachers. Resubmissions should be offered close to the original assessment and only to individual students who are on the grade boundary and can independently identify the error or omission and correct it themselves. The school agreed to clarify this processes with staff to ensure consistent and correct resubmission practice.

**School-based evidence to support special assessment condition applications is developing** Since 2015, the school has increased the identification of students requiring special assessment conditions. Attendance at NZQA-run Special Assessment Condition Seminars has provided staff with the knowledge and confidence to support applications with school-based evidence. Using school-based evidence removes the potential financial barrier of a Level C Assessor Report. This addresses the agreed action from the 2015 review.



**Supporting Māori achievement is a focus for all teachers** Māori achievement has improved significantly at all levels, with Level 1 and 2 achievement now above national and decile figures. Professional learning to support teachers to provide relevant contexts for learning and assessment alongside the school's tracking and monitoring, and keeping whānau informed of student progress, have been contributing factors to this improvement.

### **Agreed action**

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

- clarify resubmission assessment opportunities for teachers and students.

## 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)*

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

- ensuring teachers are provided with clear expectations on internal moderation requirements
- documenting the internal moderation process for each standard assessed before results are reported to NZQA
- using subject specialists from outside of the school to verify assessor judgements
- using exemplars to support assessment decisions
- requiring Leaders of Learning to complete an annual Quality Assurance report including an interview with the Principal's Nominee to confirm internal moderation processes have been followed and credible results reported.

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

- ensuring samples of student work are provided for external moderation by being adequately stored
- using a random selection method that meets current NZQA requirements
- following up on external moderation feedback, including documenting actions and monitoring that agreed actions are completed.

**Clarification of verification process** Internal moderation is an embedded process in the six departments reviewed. However, inconsistent verification practice was described and sighted including limiting the verification sample to eight or four samples, verifying all student work where there are fewer than 10 students in a class, and verifying an additional sample following a robust panel marking process. Documenting the verification discussion or final grade awarded was not completed on all coversheets sighted.

To strengthen the verification process and assist with managing teacher assessment workload, the school agreed to clarify that work for verification should be purposefully selected and sufficient to provide assurance that grades awarded are at the standard. The purposeful selection, for example, at grade boundaries or where a teacher is unsure, will assist with managing teacher assessment workload, support teachers understanding of grade boundaries and provide future benchmarks.

**Making the random selection for external moderation at the time of assessment completion is recommended** Some teachers interviewed identified the additional workload involved in preparing the random selection for the school's 1 April submission date. As discussed at the review, the school is encouraged to consider making the random selection immediately after completion of assessment and store the assessment material, so that it was readily available if selected for external moderation.

**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:

- clarify that student work for verification should be purposefully selected and sufficient.

**For consideration**

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

- completing the random selection for external moderation at the time the assessment is completed.

## 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)*

### Waitara High School effectively:

- **uses assessment-related data to support achievement outcomes for students by:**
  - monitoring student progress, identifying students at risk of not achieving a qualification and providing support including negotiating programme changes
  - operating a traffic light system to assist subject teachers and Deans to monitor student progress against set subject and NCEA credit targets, to identify where additional support is required
  - supporting students and parents to track NCEA progress using the parent portal
  - annually reporting to the Principal and Board of Trustees an analysis of NCEA achievement.
- **manages assessment-related data by:**
  - using the Key Indicators to identify and resolve data submission errors
  - reporting results and entries to NZQA in a timely manner
  - ensuring a Memorandum of Understanding is held for all external provider codes grades are reported against.

**Ensuring all internal entries have a result reported** The school has reduced the high number of internal entries without a result reported over the past two years. This was an agreed action in the 2015 review. However, the number should be reduced further as they are still significantly above what is an acceptable level. The use of NZQA reports prior to 1 December can assist with ensuring that a result is reported or the entry withdrawn if no assessment has taken place.

**Effective use data to monitor student NCEA achievement** The more systematic tracking of individual student progress, early identification of students at risk and introduction of mentoring are contributing factors to the school's improved achievement. Achievement targets for each term, by level and for merit and excellence grades are set and published using an NCEA "Data Wall". This keeps staff informed of student progress against school targets and provides the opportunity to work collaboratively to support achievement targets.

### Agreed action

NZQA and senior management agree on the following action to improve the management and use of assessment-related data. Senior management undertakes to:

- ensure all internal entries have a result reported or are withdrawn if no assessment has taken place.

## 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))*

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

- reviewing communications to ensure they are current
- assisting students and whānau to monitor NCEA progress through the parent portal
- keeping whānau informed of their student's progress with 3 weekly progress reports and *Progress and Pathway* meetings
- communicating NCEA assessment policy and procedures to students and their whānau using a range of media.

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

- checking that Leaders of Learning and students are following processes
- checking that students understand what they need to achieve a qualification
- using Leaders of Learning and staff meetings to clarify changes to procedures and expectations, and to provide the opportunity to discuss assessment best practice.

**Amendments to staff and student handbooks** The staff and student handbooks were reviewed in 2016 and are relevant documents presented in plain English. The school agreed that when the handbooks are next updated the following additions and clarifications would be included.

- **In the student handbooks add:**
  - that students can appeal any assessment decision
  - that Not Achieved is reported for proven breaches of authenticity and where a student has had an adequate assessment opportunity and provided no work.
- **In the staff handbook:**
  - that students can appeal any assessment decision
  - include information on the justification and verification process for marking an assessment that could be used for a derived grade
  - clarify resubmission and further assessment opportunities by putting them under separate headings
  - note that work selected for verification should be purposefully selected at grade boundaries and/or where unsure, and be sufficient to be confident decisions are consistent with the standard.

**Course outline information provided to students is to be reviewed** The school agreed, at the 2015 review, to introduce a common template for course outlines. A standardised template will assist with understanding and ensure consistent and sufficient information is provided to students. Senior Management agreed to work to have this action item addressed for the 2019 year. Use of the assessment statement

generated from the school's student management systems was suggested as a possible format at the review.

### **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 the staff and student NCEA assessment information as outlined in the communication section of this report
- develop a course outline template to standardise information provided to students.