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Managing National Assessment Report

Whanganui City College

October 2021

What this report is about

This report summarises NZQA’s review of how effectively Whanganui City 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 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
- *Whanganui City College Senior Courses for 2022* (including course outlines for Years 11, 12 and 13)
- *Whanganui City College Evaluation and Reporting Staff Procedures Manual 2021* (Staff Handbook)
- *NCEA Assessment STUDENT Information* (Student Handbook).

The School Relationship Manager met with:

- the Principal's Nominee
- Leaders of Learning for:
 - English
 - Mathematics
 - Music
 - Te Reo Māori / Te Reo Rangatira
 - Technology
- two 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

Whanganui City College

29 October 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.

What the school is doing well

The Whanganui City College challenge (wero) to its learning community is whanaungatanga, empathy, resilience, and oranga. This connects to their graduate student profile which focuses on learning, connection and contribution. It also creates their framework for course and assessment design which places the student at the centre of planning.

The school has comprehensively analysed attainment data and community feedback to determine its priorities for teaching, learning and assessment. This has led to them introducing a range of changes, including the graduate student profile, designed to improve outcomes for students and to better meet their individual needs.

Giving student's agency over course planning and providing academic mentoring to support tracking of students for success, are strong features of school practice. Senior leaders, deans and teachers work alongside individual students and their whānau to guide course decision-making, goal setting and on-going review of these, using digital tools to record, retain and share details.

Sound internal moderation practices at the school provide senior leaders with assurance that grades are awarded appropriately. The Principal's Nominee oversees this work closely, using checks and interview processes to ensure that the expected practices are being followed.

Teachers use data to review courses and to track individual student achievement. Course review contributes to on-going course development and results in contextualised learning and assessment programmes designed and modified to meet student needs.

The school's experienced Principal's Nominee has developed good resources for sharing expected assessment practice with teachers. He is readily available for professional support, and uses a mixture of formal and informal processes, including department audits, meetings, and student interviews, to share good assessment practice and to check that actual practice meets expectations.

Areas for improvement

Processes for identifying students eligible for Special Assessment Conditions should be developed and implemented. Staff interviewed for the review were aware of students for whom applications could be considered. A formal process would ensure

that appropriate evidence was collected for supporting applications. This would reduce the risk of students facing unnecessary and inequitable barriers to assessment.

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

Agreed action

The school agreed that the following action will improve the quality of their assessment systems:

- implement processes to identify students eligible for Special Assessment Conditions and ensure they have equitable access to entitlements.

Kay Wilson
Manager
School Quality Assurance and Liaison

07 December 2021

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 11 April 2018 Managing National Assessment Report There were no agreed actions in the 2018 report.

Response to external moderation outcomes The Principal's Nominee closely monitors external moderation feedback and supports senior teachers to respond and make changes. Subject leaders review external moderation in the annual department report, along with any changes they plan to make. The next step is for line managers to follow up with teachers to determine the effectiveness of the changes made, and any resulting additional professional support needs. This would ensure that internal review of external moderation is effectively shared and close the review cycle.

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)

Senior assessment in the school is in a time of transformation. The goal is to improve student outcomes, particularly at Level 2, by focusing on understanding and meeting individual student interests and needs. Senior leaders at the school are conducting effective and comprehensive review of student assessment outcomes and information gathered from community feedback. This approach to change is aimed at improving student outcomes and ensuring that their career pathway aspirations are at the heart of planning.

The process has identified that preparation for post-school employment and industry-related training are priorities for the community. To address these priorities the school has made changes that include:

- reducing formal assessment for qualifications at Level 1 to focus on learning
- strengthening literacy and numeracy teaching and the collection of assessment evidence with Year 11 students
- supporting Māori students by integrating te ao Māori into all learning areas
- developing courses at all levels by focusing on contexts of interest to students and encouraging them to develop greater agency over their learning and assessment programmes
- individualising programmes of learning and assessment by negotiating educational goals with students and whānau
- using Wananga time in Whānau classes each week to focus on self-management, decision making and academic mentoring
- utilising an online tool “MyMahi” to record and share student goals and individual education plans
- setting targets for student success at Level 2 NCEA over a two-year course.

The school will continue to gather and analyse feedback from all stakeholders as it embeds these changes.

For consideration

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

- evaluating the effectiveness of actions taken in response to external moderator reports to close the review cycle and share ownership of internal 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 2021 5.1 – 5.7)

Whanganui City College has effective processes and procedures for meeting the assessment needs of their students by:

- designing innovative courses based on contexts which promote student engagement in learning and assessment
- managing Numeracy and Literacy creatively using a variety of practical contexts across the school curriculum, to create connections to naturally occurring evidence
- using checkpoint deadlines to ensure students are on track to complete assessments by their due date
- negotiating assessment plans and deadlines with students as part of individual learning plans and assessing students when they are ready
- working with a range of external providers to extend the school curriculum into industry related courses.

Whanganui City College has effective processes and procedures for:

- managing missed assessments and resubmissions
- following up on appeals of grades by students
- checking on the authenticity of student assessment submissions
- ensuring evidence for derived grades meets NZQA guidelines
- meeting the requirements of the *Privacy Act 2020*.

Identification of students eligible for Special Assessment Conditions required

The school must implement a process so that students eligible for Special Assessment Conditions are identified and applications made to NZQA. The lack of a strong identification process means some students may face barriers to equitable access to assessment. Based on national data, eight percent of students at Whanganui City College are likely to be eligible for this support. Staff interviewed for the review were aware of students for whom applications should be considered, which could help form the basis for identification.

NZQA can support the school to develop their process by conducting a review of Special Assessment Conditions with the school. The process should include Learning Support leaders, and teachers, becoming familiar with school-based evidence requirements for identifying students with special assessment needs to support applications.

The school has made no applications for Special Assessment Conditions since the last 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:

- implement processes to identify students eligible for Special Assessment Conditions and ensure they have access to their entitlements.

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 2021 6.4b)

Whanganui City College has effective processes and procedures for managing internal moderation by:

- ensuring all assessment materials are suitably critiqued prior to use
- verifying grades awarded on purposefully selected samples of student work using subject specialists, including from local networks
- documenting the process using a digital or physical cover sheet to provide assurance that internal moderation has been completed
- the Principal's Nominee monitoring that processes have been followed prior to submitting results to NZQA.

Whanganui City College has effective processes and procedures for managing external moderation by:

- selecting samples of student work to NZQA requirements.

Subject leaders could be more involved with external moderation procedures

Greater involvement by subject leaders in the procedures for external moderation would support the Principal's Nominee to:

- ensure that materials are provided for all standards in the annual moderation plan
- identify the standards which would provide the most useful feedback to teachers to be externally moderated, in order to support their professional development
- manage follow up to external moderation feedback.

Currently, the Principal's Nominee oversees all aspects of external moderation for the subject team. Some devolving of responsibilities could engage teachers with the process and support continuity and succession planning. It would also strengthen review of moderation feedback, ensuring that effective support and change were implemented where required.

For consideration

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

- increasing the involvement of subject leaders in the management of responsibilities 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)*

Whanganui City College effectively uses assessment-related data to support achievement outcomes for students by:

- creating individual learning and assessment programmes based on student agency and assessment evidence which support individual interests and priorities
- tracking and supporting progress towards their goals by Whānau teachers in weekly wananga sessions supported by the Academic Dean
- analysing student achievement data to review the effectiveness of courses
- reporting in annual learning area reports course outcomes and planned changes to senior leaders and the Board of Trustees.

Whanganui City College reports accurate achievement data by:

- supporting students and parents to use portal access to the student management system to check results
- submitting regular datafiles to NZQA and resolving any issues that arise
- completing memoranda of understanding with external providers and checking that entries include the correct provider details
- ensuring that all assessment entries have results or are withdrawn by the final datafile.

Input from school community supports changing assessment practice The school has sought input from its community to ensure that the planned changes meet students' needs. This on-going dialogue is good practice where analysis of assessment data is regularly reviewed by teachers and senior leaders against insights from student, whānau and community feedback.

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))

Whanganui City College has effective processes and procedures for:

- ensuring students receive comprehensive outlines for all courses they undertake
- utilising a digital tool (“MyMahi”) to support students to develop and share their goals and pathways aspirations, and relate these to their course choice and assessment planning
- communicating assessment policy and procedure in staff handbooks
- reviewing communications annually to ensure they are fit for purpose and current.

Whanganui City College assists common understanding of assessment practice by:

- using regular formal and informal meetings with teachers, particularly those new to the school, to inform and support assessment best practice and provide opportunities to discuss queries and changes
- the Principal’s Nominee meeting with all senior students in their Whānau classes to explain the school’s assessment processes.

Principal’s Nominee supports consistent assessment practice The Principal’s Nominee supports consistent practice by conducting random checks of department systems and by interviewing students about their experience of assessment. This good practice provides assurance that teachers are following the expected processes.

Support students to understand NCEA and check entries The information provided to students could be expanded to support access to information about NCEA and their external entries. Students interviewed for the review were clear about their courses, level of achievement and career pathways. However, they were less certain about the requirements of NCEA and their entries for external examinations.

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:

- expanding the information provided to students to support their checking of external examination entries and understanding of the requirements of NCEA.