

Managing National Assessment Report

Whanganui High School

April 2019

What this report is about

This report summarises NZQA's review of how effectively Whanganui 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
- *NZQA Student Booklet, L1 2017*
- *NZQA Levels 2 and 3 Booklet for Students 2017*
- *Whanganui High School Assessment Statement Section A: Procedures & Practices 2016 (Staff Handbook)*
- *Whanganui High School Assessment Statement Section B: Senior School Assessment 2016 (Staff Handbook)*
- *Appeal Procedure 2016*
- *Whanganui High School Procedure: Assessment and Reporting 2016 (Board of Trustees Policy)*
- a sample of course outlines for Years 11, 12 and 13.
- Analysis of Variance (for 2017 and 2018 academic years)
- A shared 2019 external moderation planning Google sheet.

The School Relationship Manager met with:

- the Principal's Nominee
- Associate Principal
- Faculty Heads for
 - Digital Technology
 - Languages
 - Mathematics
 - Science
 - Social Sciences
 - Technology
- three students.

There was a report-back session with the Principal, Associate 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 High School

10 April 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

Whanganui High School uses the acronym LIFE [Learning (Ako), Integrity (Mana), Fellowship (Manaakitanga), Excellence (Kairangi)] and their graduate student profile to communicate their vision for student achievement. These in turn inform review within the school. Their curriculum is viewed as a 'living document' and is changed in response to review outcomes and student needs.

The school has a wide variety of course options for students. It offers courses differentiated by assessment methods and extension classes which advance students as appropriate. Faculty leaders review outcomes across courses and willingly make changes in response. The Principal's Nominee meets face-to-face with faculty leaders each year to ensure that school-wide assessment procedures are understood and followed.

Moderation processes are robust and ensure that results reported to NZQA are credible. Staff at Whanganui High School support colleagues in the Whanganui region through active participation in regular collaborative moderation sessions.

The school manages its data carefully to ensure that results and entries are accurate and kept up to date. Assessment data is used to inform decision-making, with faculty leaders required to report to senior leaders and to the Board of Trustees regarding achievement rates and future planning.

Whanganui High School offers a range of ways in which students and parents can gather information about courses and NCEA. They distribute information early in the academic year that sets out the planned programme of learning and assessment in each course, and reinforce these through evening meetings with whānau new to NCEA and in school assemblies. Teachers back this up with clear and consistent messages to students.

Areas for improvement

Whanganui High School's external moderation process will be strengthened by checking that agreed changes are put into place by the next assessment cycle to complete the review loop.

The process for external moderation needs to ensure that the randomly selected student work is representative of all marked work by it not being subjected to further review prior to submission.

The school should review the staff and student NCEA handbooks annually to better ensure that all information is current and accurate.

Agreed actions

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

- complete the external moderation process by checking that actions resolve identified issues by the next assessment cycle
- ensure that staff do not re-mark, re-check or otherwise review the randomly selected sample for external moderation prior to it being submitted
- review staff and student NCEA handbooks annually, making changes as required to keep the books current.

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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 06 July 2016 Managing National Assessment Report

All action items from the 2016 Managing National Assessment review have been completed. Teachers assessment practice, including resubmission, aligns with the staff handbook and they purposefully select internal moderation samples for verification. The school noted that they have further work to do this year in updating their NCEA handbooks for staff and students.

Response to external moderation outcomes

The school has systems in place to ensure that external moderation outcomes are reviewed by staff and appropriate responses are made. The Principal's Nominee manages this process using an online document and face to face meetings. The next step is for the process to ensure that actions taken resolve the identified issues. This would allow leaders to monitor responses through to action and complete 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)

Whanganui High School's strategic documents clearly set out a specific framework for effective internal review, and each year the analysis of variance responds to this framework with observations and plans for improvement. The school has value statements and measures that it also uses to create a culture of self-review. These include its vision to "...provide a future-focused education which promotes success for all students." A set of skills and attributes form their *Graduate Student Profile*, and their mission statement incorporates the acronym LIFE [Learning (Ako), Integrity (Mana), Fellowship (Manaakitanga), Excellence (Kairangi)], from their motto, "*That we might have life.*"

The school sets a range of achievement targets annually in response to previous results. Individual faculties analyse their achievement data and report directly to the Principal and the Board of Trustees, specifically focusing on using the data to inform change. A variety of strategies have been implemented and there is evidence of inquiry processes being used to evaluate the effectiveness of these strategies.

Recent strategies include reducing student workload by changing the number of courses selected by students from seven to six at each year level. This has reduced the average number of credits students are undertaking over the course of a year, particularly at Level 1. In 2018, Year 11 students gained similar levels of Merit and Excellence endorsement, however, success in meeting the Level 1 Numeracy and Literacy requirements and in attaining Level 1 overall were all down. Further effort and inquiry into academic mentoring at all levels is being implemented in response.

In order to strengthen academic mentoring in 2019 the school is aiming to more effectively coordinate support for students who are at risk of not meeting their achievement targets. The school has developed the position of Academic Dean to lead and support the pastoral team in this work, which includes a plan to provide academic mentoring to all Māori and Pacific students. The school is working to ensure that there is a greater level of coherence between potential career options and course selection and on improving the depth and quality of its vocational pathways advice and planning.

As an example of internal review leading to change, the Mathematics faculty reviewed their participation in the Mathematics Common Assessment Task following disappointing results in 2017. The decision was taken to change the content of some of their courses by reducing the focus on assessing algebraic skills. Other faculties are aiming to improve student engagement by increasing the number of practical assessments in their courses.

Agreed action

NZQA and senior management agree on the following action to improve the school's response to external review. Senior management undertakes to:

- complete the external moderation process by checking that actions resolve identified issues by the next assessment cycle.

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)

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

- designing a range of courses in core learning areas in order to meet the learning needs of groups of students
- applying for special assessment conditions and providing appropriate support for eligible students
- providing advancement and extension courses for students including options to undertake some NCEA assessment at Year 10
- assessing when ready, as appropriate
- providing consistent resubmission practice, in line with NZQA expectations, across faculties.

Whanganui High School has effective processes and procedures for:

- managing missed and late assessment
- investigating appeals of assessment decision
- managing breaches of the rules of assessment
- meeting the requirements of the *Privacy Act 1993*.

Effective assessment practice Leaders in faculties conduct annual reviews of assessment plans. There is evidence that these are flexible and adaptable to student need. The Principal's Nominee ensures that this process is robust by meeting face-to-face with all faculty leaders annually, thereby ensuring that assessment practice is consistent with school and NZQA expectations.

Effectively utilising learning management and assessment tools Faculty leaders and students spoke about the value of Google Classroom as a tool for gathering assessment evidence. It is used to monitor work completion and provide feedback to students prior to deadlines. Students interviewed were positive about the feedforward given at various milestones where longer-term project or written work is being assessed. Assessors can check on the authenticity of student work by observing progress in class, using the document history and utilising an online plagiarism checker. Google classroom also helps students to manage their deadlines through the addition of submission dates, effectively creating an assessment calendar.

Equity in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) subjects at Level 3 Whanganui High School notes that there is a significant gap in equity between Māori students and students of other ethnicities when comparing success in one or more STEM subjects at Level 3. The school has agreed that further review of practice is required to improve the situation. They are placing more emphasis on meeting with Māori (and Pacific) students and their whānau and on improving the advice given to students around their career pathways and subject choices.

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)

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

- ensuring all assessment materials are critiqued prior to use
- using subject specialists from within and outside the school to verify a purposefully selected sample of student work
- documenting the internal moderation process using a paper or digital copy of the *internal moderation cover sheet*
- monitoring that reporting of grades to NZQA is only done following the completion of the internal moderation process
- supporting colleagues in the Whanganui region through active participation in collaborative moderation sessions.

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

- requesting a wide range of standards to be externally moderated and negotiating appropriate changes to their plan
- selecting samples of student work randomly to NZQA requirements
- ensuring samples of student work are provided by being adequately stored – in most cases digitally.

Focus on reducing workload by considering verification requirements for sufficiency Faculty leaders assure the quality of grades awarded on internal assessment by including work at grade boundaries when verifying assessor judgements. However, all of those interviewed verify more samples of student work than this by also including a random selection. The school should consider providing staff with further guidance on sufficient verification by the strategic selection of student work and removing any expectation that an additional random sample is included.

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. Faculty leaders should be made aware that random sampling is not required for internal moderation.

Confirming processes for setting aside the randomly selected sample for external moderation It is important that all staff follow the correct procedure in setting aside a random sample of student work for external moderation purposes. This random sample should occur after completion of internal moderation and should not undergo any additional review prior to being submitted, if the school is to be confident that external moderation results are valid.

Agreed actions

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:

- ensure that staff do not re-mark, re-check or otherwise review the randomly selected sample for external moderation prior to it being submitted.

For Consideration

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

- ensuring that all staff understand the process of strategically selecting a sample of student work to verify 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)

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

- providing appropriate pathways for students that include extension options, courses with external providers, New Zealand Scholarship and the mix of internal and external assessment
- making changes to their curriculum in response to achievement data
- evaluating courses annually in order to improve teaching and assessment practice
- tracking results to identify students who might benefit from academic mentoring.

Whanganui High School reports accurate achievement data by:

- timely reporting of results to NZQA
- ensuring that all internal entries have results, or are withdrawn, as appropriate, by the published due date
- using Key Indicators to identify and correct errors in their data.

Data is used to target student support The school uses assessment data to identify students at risk of not achieving Level 1 and 2, and drawing them into a more comprehensive academic mentoring programme. The number of students being monitored through this programme has expanded to meet need. A new Vocational Pathways programme at Level 2 has also been established to support students with meeting individual and appropriate learning and assessment goals.

The school has a designated staff member in the English and Mathematics faculties tasked with tracking progress towards meeting NCEA Literacy and Numeracy requirements. Others in the wider pastoral care team assist in providing support for those being tracked.

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 High School has effective processes and procedures for:

- ensuring students receive consistent outlines for all the courses they undertake
- communicating assessment policy and procedure to parents, students and teachers
- supporting teachers new to the school.

Whanganui High School assists common understanding of assessment practice by:

- providing information so that teachers and students can follow processes
- informing teachers about assessment best practice and providing opportunities to discuss changes
- assisting students to understand what they need to achieve in order to gain a qualification.

Communication to staff is effective Staff at Whanganui High School are clear about what is expected of them in managing assessment for NCEA. Senior leaders are guiding their team of experienced faculty leaders, as line managers. In turn these leaders take a strong leadership role within their faculties to ensure that good quality practice is understood and followed.

A wide range of communications ensure students and their families understand the assessment process Direct messages from the Principal's Nominee, backed up by classroom teachers, meant that students interviewed were very clear about their pathway and the requirements of NCEA. They were also able to speak clearly and accurately about processes such as application for extension, resubmission, moderation, managing authenticity, breaches and reviewing their results. They all spoke enthusiastically about the way assessment is managed through Google Classroom and how results are obtained through their student management system student login.

The school distributes to their wider community information about courses, NCEA and assessment on their website. They also meet with whānau annually, prioritising those with children entering Level 1. The slideshow presentation used at this meeting is also made available on the school website. School assemblies early in the year reinforce this information for students.

Parents are encouraged to use the student management system parent portal. They are shown how to do this as opportunity arises. Furthermore, a process of "live reporting" has been introduced which enables parents to get up-to-date comments from teachers through the portal. The students interviewed reported that this feature is very popular with their parents.

Keeping handbooks current It is important that staff and student NCEA guides are reviewed annually to ensure they are up to date. The current versions of the staff and student handbooks were last updated in 2017. In both booklets some information

could be more accurately worded. This would improve their currency and usefulness in supporting practice.

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 staff and student handbooks annually, making changes as required to keep them current.