

Managing National Assessment Report

Palmerston North Girls' High School

11 April 2018

What this report is about

This report summarises NZQA's review of how effectively Palmerston North Girls' 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
- *National Certificate of Educational Achievement Student Handbook 2018, Palmerston North Girls' High School*
- *National Certificate of Educational Achievement, Assessment Procedures for Staff 2018, Palmerston North Girls' High School*
- *Internal Moderation Check 2017, Palmerston North Girls' High School*
- *NZQA Department Review, Palmerston North Girls' High School*
- *Department Annual Report 2017, Palmerston North Girls' High School*
- a sample of course outlines for Years 11, 12 and 13.

The School Relationship Manager met with the Principal's Nominee, three students and Heads of Department for Digital Technologies, English, Mathematics, Music, Social Science and Visual Arts.

There was a report-back session with the Deputy Principal, two Assistant Principals and the 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

Palmerston North Girls' High School

11 April 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 issues. Therefore, it is anticipated that the next Managing National Assessment review will be conducted within four years.

What the school is doing well

Palmerston North Girls' High School has a shared vision of high expectations and the pursuit of excellence in academic achievement. The school has developed an ethos of striving for course and certificate endorsements and New Zealand Scholarships, where appropriate. Expectations for students to achieve are reflected in the school's high NCEA and Scholarship results. Most students achieve the NCEA qualification appropriate to their year level.

Self-review focuses on strengthening assessment practice to ensure assessment for national qualifications is credible and provides a quality experience for students. Consistent assessment practice was evident across all departments that participated in the review and in student responses to interview questions. The Principal's Nominee, new to this role since the last review, is committed to increasing the school-wide consistency, understanding and ownership of NCEA processes.

As part of the school's internal self-review process, the interrogation of data and student evaluations informs course delivery improvements, including changes to standards and assessment contexts. Assessment opportunities focus on scaffolding learning, check points and feedback, thereby reducing the need for resubmissions and further assessment opportunities. A range of strategies are effectively used to ensure that student work is authentic.

The school has embedded processes and practices for internal and external moderation. The Principal's Nominee annually audits all departments to ensure documented moderation processes reflect actual practice. This provides senior leadership with full confidence that all results reported to NZQA are quality assured and credible.

The management of assessment data is highly efficient. Results reported to NZQA are complete, timely and accurate. Entries and results are checked at all levels of the school, using statistical reports available from the student management system and the NZQA website.

Data analysis and use is a strength of the school, informing good practice and self-review for teachers, Heads of Departments, senior leadership and the Board of Trustees. Comprehensive processes for data analysis enable achievement school-wide to be monitored, to assist students to attain qualifications and meet personal goals and expectations. As appropriate, support and interventions assist students to

improve outcomes. High participation and attainment are a consequence of the effective monitoring and tracking of NCEA achievement progress for all students.

The strategic direction of the school ensures all teachers share responsibility of the school's NCEA assessment procedures. The Principal's Nominee continually evaluates school assessment processes and leads improvements in quality assurance to ensure consistent practice. Efficient communication is evident at all levels of the school's organisation. Senior leadership and staff work collegially to provide a shared culture of meeting student needs and supporting students to succeed.

Areas for improvement

Documenting current discussion on the management of digital evidence for assessment in a school policy would ensure school-wide consistency of practice.

The school acknowledged that the handbooks on assessment procedures are a work in progress. Minor modifications are required to ensure documentation reflects current practice. Clarification of approaches to evidence gathering of student achievement, the use of the authenticity tool, and privacy requirements need to be included.

Agreed action

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

- updating and clarifying documentation as indicated in this report.

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28 May 2018

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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 28 August 2015 Managing National Assessment Report

The Principal's Nominee, working collaboratively with senior leadership and staff, has addressed fully the action items from the last review.

The two identified significant issues concerned one subject area teacher within a department disregarding school processes and NZQA requirements by not undertaking internal moderation for assessed work nor submitting requested material for the moderation cycle for 2014 academic year. A return visit, made to check on 18 May 2017, confirmed that the issues had been addressed.

- The school's robust internal moderation processes are now effectively monitored and practiced school-wide. These procedures ensure that evidence of achievement is valid, authentic and sufficient (CAAS Guidelines 2.6ii), as discussed in the moderation section of the report.
- All departments now comply with the external moderation requirements of NZQA and standard setting bodies (CAAS Guidelines 2.6iv). The subject area of identified concern has submitted all the standards requested for external moderation since 2015, with assessor judgements being consistent with the external moderator.

Response to agreed action from 2015 The school has strengthened practices for identifying students requiring special education conditions and resourcing their support appropriately. Significantly more special assessment applications are now made to NZQA, with school-based data used as evidence for about two thirds of the applications. Following cameo presentations at staff meetings, teachers are more confident referring students for testing, and are well-informed of individual students with entitlements. As a result, eligible students are now receiving appropriate support.

The thorough response to address action items from the 2015 review is indicative of the school's increased capability to monitor school assessment processes and act effectively, together with the school-wide commitment to improve assessment practice and quality assurance.

Response to external moderation outcomes The school has had consistently high overall agreement rate for external moderation, reflecting effective and timely responses to external moderation feedback and robust internal moderation.

The Principal's Nominee formally discusses with Heads of Department the outcomes of external moderation. Action plans are developed where issues are identified. Agreed actions are monitored, and their completion is documented. Appropriate support is provided to improve practice, where required. The Principal and Principal's Nominee discuss external moderation feedback and evaluate the effectiveness of the actions undertaken to address issues.

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 Principal and Principal's Nominee, new in the roles since the last review, and strongly supported by all senior leaders, have built on the school's shared vision of high expectations for student achievement. Embedded in this strategic focus is quality learning centred on meeting student need underpinned by effective and credible assessment practice.

There was clear evidence during the review that ownership for credible and consistent assessment practice that supports student achievement is distributed across every level of the school, including the students. All members of the senior leadership team have oversight of their designated curriculum areas through their support of Heads of Department to lead teaching, learning and assessment. Similarly, with their year level students senior leaders have responsibility for mentoring staff to assist students to complete qualifications. Annual data analysis and the triennial review of NZQA processes by the senior leadership designate are examples of this distributed ownership of assessment practice. Staff discuss best NCEA practice at regular Management Forum and full staff meetings which provide an avenue for review. The Principal's Nominee takes review outcomes and develops and leads quality assurance improvements to achieve greater consistency for teachers and students. This includes seeking NZQA advice about evolving best practice. This collaborative approach means teachers and students show a shared accountability and understanding of assessment processes and qualifications.

Self-review is effective and key to the school's development. Review is informed by extensive data analysis and interpretation, including student voice, and involves innovation and planning for the future. Senior leadership, in collaboration with the staff, have pro-actively evaluated the effectiveness of current assessment practices and considered future developments, to support student achievement and ensure practice is credible and current.

A curriculum review is underway to explore how the NCEA assessment model can be applied to best meet changing and future needs of students. Offering fewer credits in current programmes is under discussion, to assist students to manage their assessment workload, and to focus on quality of achievement by "doing less, better." The place of compulsory subjects, NCEA assessment in Year 10 and designing assessment tasks to assess against more than one standard, as appropriate, are being considered.

An innovative digital analysis tool is being introduced to enable subject teachers, Deans, Heads of Departments and school leaders to review student achievement data in real time. The tool provides current, comprehensive and accessible graphic profiles for individual and groups of students, and allows identification of possible causes of unexpected performance, such as poor attendance, and thereby possible remedies. Individualised assessment programme can also be produced for each student. The tool will improve the school's ability to identify students at risk of not achieving a qualification and to monitor and support students in their progress to meet academic and personal goals.

A google site for students has been newly established as the repository of NCEA information, such as NZQA November containing the external examination timetable

and derived grade application form. This different way of communicating is in response to student and staff voice and has contributed to greater understanding of what is happening in the school.

While success in Scholarship examinations has increased, the Principal's Nominee is reviewing the entries in Scholarship subjects to address non-attendance at the examinations by one third of the entrants. Feedback is provided to Scholarship teachers on levels of student participation in their subject. Actions include ensuring examination at the Scholarship level is an intended achievement goal for the student, and encouraging adequate preparation, including active engagement in tutorials.

Self-review is supported by a school-wide commitment to excellence and collaborative ownership of NCEA assessment practice. A collaborative culture has been developed through forthright discussion about teaching, assessment and achievement, valuing assessment feedback for professional learning and shared responsibility for quality assurance processes and consistency of assessment practices school-wide.

The school's robust self-review and professional leadership of NCEA assessment practices illustrate its effectiveness to respond to changes in student learning needs and evaluate practices accordingly, to enhance opportunities for student success. This approach has contributed to the school realising its vision as NCEA results have been consistently above the national and equivalent decile cohorts.

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)

Palmerston North Girls' High School has effective processes and procedures for meeting the assessment needs of their students by:

- providing differentiated assessment opportunities across classes in same subjects and within courses, including the use of negotiated standards
- scaffolding and contextualising learning and assessment so they are relevant and engage student interests, and where appropriate, assessing students when they are ready
- offering life skills and work ready skills programmes through Gateway and STAR funding, to support students beyond school, and extending assessment opportunities by engaging with external providers
- offering assessment programmes with fewer credits so students can do less, better
- collecting evidence of student achievement in a variety of ways, including through portfolios, group activities and the use of digital tools
- monitoring and supporting Level 1 literacy and numeracy achievement.

Palmerston North Girls' High School has effective processes and procedures for:

- assisting students to present authentic work by developing understanding of plagiarism, standardising referencing, monitoring authenticity, including using a plagiarism tool, and recording the outcomes of any investigations
- reporting Not Achieved for proven breaches of authenticity and where students have had an adequate assessment opportunity but submitted no work
- operating an appeals process based on the principles of natural justice
- ensuring credible assessment through consistent school-wide assessment practice on missed and late work
- providing valid resubmission and further assessment opportunities
- effectively managing NZQA external examinations, including upskilling school staff to assist with marshalling and reassurance of students prior to the examination session
- participating in a Level 1 digital trial examination in 2017 and the 2018 Level 1 Science Trial, to engage students to prepare for future assessment practice
- ensuring derived grades are based on authentic, standard-specific evidence from practice examinations or other appropriate assessment.

Digital assessment conventions The development of policy and procedures is underway, to effectively manage the school-wide conventions for the use of digital tools to collect and store evidence, and disseminate information. These conventions will ensure that evidence collected is authentic, credible and accessible. The next step is to ensure that the conventions are understood by teachers and students.

Teachers are increasingly collecting a range of evidence of achievement by digital tools. Using digital tools supports students to present their best evidence, and allows the opportunity to provide check points and on-going feedback and feedforward information.

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:

- publish policy and procedures for the management of evidence collected using digital tools.

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)

Palmerston North Girls' High School has effective processes and procedures for managing internal moderation by:

- ensuring assessment activities are appropriate for the standard by having modified or new assessments critiqued prior to use
- using clarification documents, benchmark exemplars, verification notes and professional learning opportunities to clarify and support assessment judgements
- ensuring teachers are provided with clear expectations on internal moderation requirements and regularly checking departmental processes.

Palmerston North Girls' 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
- selecting samples of student work for external moderation randomly to NZQA requirements
- valuing external moderation feedback for the clarification of grade boundaries, assistance with the understanding of the standard and to confirm the robustness of the school's internal moderation
- reviewing moderation reports from Industry Training Organisations as part of the school's response to external moderation
- encouraging teachers to suggest appropriate standards to be considered for inclusion in the moderation plan and upskilling teachers to manage the submission process, including liaising with another school to identify problems and best approach.

Robust internal moderation processes Internal moderation is now embedded practice school-wide, following the recommendation of the 2015 review. Heads of department are responsible for ensuring internal moderation is undertaken and documented for all standards assessed in their area.

Sufficient samples of marked student work are strategically selected, including at grade boundaries for verification of assessor judgements, to be confident of the results across classes.

Documentation of the critiquing and verification process for each standard is required on the *Internal Moderation Cover Sheet* before results are reported to NZQA. This includes documenting discussions on grade judgements for future reference. Engaging with suitably-qualified subject specialist within or outside the school to verify student work ensures assessor judgments are consistent with the standard.

The Principal's Nominee audits each department by comprehensively reconciling actual samples of student work with documentation. An internal moderation check document is produced for the Heads of Department to highlight approaches and recommendations to the management and storage of evidence, and to share best

practice. The audit and check report has strengthened the consistency of moderation processes across all departments, assuring senior leadership that credible results are reported.

No action required

No issues with the school's internal and external moderation were identified during this review.

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)

Palmerston North Girls' High School effectively:

- **uses assessment-related data to support achievement outcomes for students by:**
 - tracking and monitoring student progress, including priority learners and those at risk of not achieving a qualification, and providing appropriate support where required
 - supporting teacher inquiries on improving student achievement
 - celebrating student achievement; awarding academic certificates through assemblies and newsletters.
- **reports accurate achievement data by:**
 - supporting students to register and use their NZQA Learner login
 - submitting fees paid and financial assistance application on time
 - ensuring the correct codes of external providers, with which the school holds current memoranda of understanding, are used when submitting results to NZQA.

Data analysis to inform change a strength Data analysis and interpretation across all levels of the school informs self-review of assessment. Teachers annually reflect on the standards they offer students. On completion of a standard, achievement outcomes are examined to review the suitability of assessment materials and to ensure achievement goals can be met. This involves gathering student voice to evaluate courses, and can lead to changes to programmes, contexts and standards. A similar examination occurs at the level of the teacher within the department.

Heads of Department interrogate statistical reports comparatively and longitudinally with their senior leadership designate, using a newly developed fit-for-purpose common template, including attainment against departmental goals. An executive summary is produced for the Principal and Board of Trustees to explain student achievement and to inform strategic goals and future actions.

Effective data management systems The management of data has been reviewed and improved processes established, assisted by the close working relationship between the Principal's Nominee and the newly appointed Data Administrator.

In Terms 2 and 3 students check the accuracy of internally assessed grades and external entries. Students sign-off their grades with teachers. Students are also encouraged to use the student management system online portal and NZQA Learner login to monitor their progress and check results.

Reported results for all internally assessed entries, negligible late external entries and high attendance levels for external examinations are evidence of thorough data management and a match to students' intended assessment programme.

Data management practices and processes ensure accurate and timely data is reported to NZQA. Key Indicators, file submission and data reports are effectively used by the Principal's Nominee and Data Administrator to identify and resolve data issues.

All Memorandum of Understanding have been revised to align with the guideline exemplar provided at the 2017 Principal's Nominee seminar, to ensure there is no risk to the credibility of reported results.

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))

Palmerston North Girls' High School has effective processes and procedures for:

- ensuring students receive consistent course information using the assessment statements from the student management system, and course booklets for all subjects they undertake
- providing a handbook for referencing sources, to meet varying requirements using feedback from Heads of Department
- communicating assessment policy and procedures to staff, students and their families using a range of methods and media
- widely distributing information on financial assistance to all students who may be eligible
- Heads of Departments supporting teachers new to the school through an induction programme
- ensuring the appropriate relationship exists when reporting results from external providers.

Palmerston North Girls' High School assists common understanding of assessment practice through enhanced communication of NCEA information

The school strategically focuses on effective school-wide communication, including NCEA information, to ensure extensive accessibility and understanding. Assessment information has systematically been reviewed and digitalised on the online learning management system to ensure documentation is current and fit for purpose.

Robust discussion and sharing of ideas at Management Forum and staff meetings supports the development of best assessment practice. Assessment processes, such as monitoring authenticity, appropriate resubmission, derived grade justification and grade checks, are the subject of targeted professional learning and clarify expectations and changes of procedures. The staff 'Team Drive' has a dedicated NZQA site containing key documents on main assessment processes, including the staff handbook, Principal's Nominee Seminar resources, and outcomes of external moderation.

The recently updated staff and student handbooks are user-friendly, concise, plain English documents, covering key information. These documents allow real time updating as practices evolve. *Understanding NCEA* and *Authenticity* PowerPoints have been developed, for use at targeted student assemblies. An NCEA evening has been introduced for parents and NZQA information is included in the monthly newsletter.

The students interviewed had a clear understanding of school assessment practices and NCEA procedures and what was needed to gain a qualification. They acknowledged the approachability of the Principal's Nominee and indicated that the assessment statements, NCEA assemblies and support to prepare for external examinations documents were very beneficial.

Minor updating of NCEA information As discussed with senior leadership, the following assessment practice needs inclusion in the handbooks, including:

- clarifying assessment types and strategies to gather evidence of student achievement
- outlining for both student and teacher use how the plagiarism tool Turnitin is used
- information on the *Privacy Act 1993* stating that:
 - students' results must be kept secure
 - permission is necessary if student work is used as exemplars
 - privacy obligations must be met during a breach of the rules or appeals investigation.

Discussion with students and staff did, however, indicate privacy requirements were being adhered to.

Agreed action

NZQA and senior leadership agree on the following action to maintain the currency of assessment policy and procedures, and communicate them to staff, students and families. Senior leadership undertakes to:

- update and clarify documentation as indicated in this report.