

# Managing National Assessment Report

## Solway College

October 2019

## What this report is about

This report summarises NZQA's review of how effectively Solway 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 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
- *Solway College Assessment policy and Procedures, 2019* (Staff Handbook)
- *Solway College NZQA Assessment Guide, 2019* (Student Handbook)
- a sample of course outlines for Years 11, 12 and 13.

The School Relationship Manager met with:

- the Principal's Nominee
- Heads of Department and Teachers in Charge of:
  - Biology
  - Chemistry
  - Digital Technology
  - English
  - Science
  - Spanish
  - Te Reo Māori
- four 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

## Solway College

23 October 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

Solway College has an effective culture of self-review that ensures the credibility of assessment and utilises the flexibility of the NCEA assessment model to meet student needs. Embedded review processes assist management to maintain its high standards, involving all staff so that their collective understanding of school requirements is evident.

To allow students to present their best evidence for achievement opportunities, differentiation of assessment within programmes is practised schoolwide. To engage students in the assessment process, the context of assessment tasks is changed to reflect their interests. There is a strong management-led emphasis on assessing students when they are ready.

Discussion on assessment matters at all levels of the school's organisation ensures the resolution of issues as well as school-wide understanding and consistency of practice. Digital platforms are increasingly being used to make assessment and achievement information current and more accessible.

Robust internal moderation processes assure senior management that only credible results are reported to NZQA. Responses to external moderation outcomes are documented and action plans developed when issues are identified, with their completion being monitored by senior management.

Data analysis and student voice inform self-review, allowing teachers to annually reflect on course design. Student entries and the reporting of results are complete and accurate. Student progress is monitored and tracked effectively with the support of a strong mentoring programme, that ensures students are meeting personal goals and expectations. Students regularly check their official results information, using their NZQA Learner Login.

Assessment practices in the senior school are effectively managed by the Principal's Nominee. She fosters discussion on NCEA issues, allowing teachers to take ownership of assessment processes in the school, and manages a robust assessment review process. She is supported in her work by the Principal and all subject leaders who work collaboratively to support student success.

**Areas for improvement**

As discussed with senior management, documentation should be updated to clarify processes for resubmissions and further assessment opportunities and the term, 'Compassionate Consideration' should be deleted.

**Agreed action**

The school agreed that an action will improve the quality of their assessment systems. That is to:

- update the staff documentation as outlined.

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18 December 2019

**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 16-17 September 2015 Managing National Assessment Report** The single agreed action item in the 2015 report; to clarify school privacy expectations, has been satisfactorily completed.

**Response to external moderation outcomes** Responses to issues identified in external moderation outcomes are documented for all departments on a standard template. Heads of Department discuss action plans with the Principal's Nominee and adequate resources are provided to support improvement in practice, when needed. An overall summary is provided to the Principal and Board of Trustees as part of the department's annual report. These embedded processes support strong agreement between the school's teachers and NZQA moderators. They ensure that external moderation feedback continues to inform credible quality assurance practices within the school.

**Response to NZQA Special Assessment Conditions (SAC) review** NZQA carried out a Special Assessment Conditions (SAC) review in Term 2, with the purpose of establishing whether the school has effective systems to appropriately identify and manage SAC entitlements for candidates, including the applications process. This review identified that whilst innovative assessment practices helped to alleviate the need for SAC in some circumstances, it was possible students were still missing out on certain entitlements. The school was asked to consider making SAC applications to test the eligibility of "lower level curriculum" students where the school had previously deemed it unnecessary.

Since the SAC review, Senior Managers have responded to NZQA's challenge; reviewing how SAC is understood and implemented within their school. In realising that the purpose of SAC is to reduce barriers to enable students to better demonstrate their knowledge, skills and understanding, and also that the process for applying is more straight-forward than they had thought, new systems for identifying which candidates may be eligible for SAC and applying on their behalf, have been instigated. These include:

- developing protocols for evidence collection that may support an application, including teacher accounts, and centralising its storage
- identifying the SAC needs of students new to the school as well as junior students who are not yet doing NCEA
- improved communication with the school community so that interested parties are more informed about SAC and its purpose
- recording SAC conditions on the student management system.

New systems and greater familiarity with the application process as a result of the SAC review and the school's effective response have led to two successful SAC applications in 2019. Furthermore, applications for identified junior students are being drafted in preparation for their NCEA years. These positive review outcomes will

further support Solway College students by accessing important SAC entitlements that give them greater capacity to achieve their academic potential whilst at school.

### **Internal review**

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

The school has a strong culture of self-review that ensures credible assessment processes and utilises the flexibility of the NCEA assessment model in order to meet student needs. Self-review processes have led to introducing strategies for improving current practice and enhancing student achievement. These include:

- students providing feedback on completed internal assessments so that staff can better plan for the next time a standard is assessed
- Heads of Departments reviewing the results of external moderation within their departments to reflect on the effectiveness of their internal moderation processes
- the Principal's Nominee using staff meetings to review assessment and moderation practice throughout the year, ensuring consistent practice and understanding
- developing practice for gathering naturally occurring evidence for integrated learning contexts, including increased use of video evidence and formative assessment
- moving achievement information and assessment documentation onto a digital platform to improve accessibility by all stakeholders
- reviewing the use of digital tools for assessment and encouraging the sharing of best practice to extend capability school-wide, positioning the school to take greater advantage of NZQA's future online opportunities.

These initiatives indicate the school's capacity to effectively conduct its own self-review processes to improve NCEA assessment practice, meeting student needs and enhancing student achievement. Robust discussions on assessment processes, strong leadership and a willingness to seek improvement, foster a culture of school-wide ownership and consistency of effective, credible NCEA assessment practice.

### **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 2019 5.5)*

### **Solway College has effective processes and procedures for meeting the assessment needs of their students by:**

- implementing strategies to enable equitable results for Māori and Pasifika students across all subjects, including open access to all courses
- contextualising assessment tasks so they are of interest to students and enhance their motivation and engagement
- offering a selection of optional standards and at multiple levels, to provide flexibility within classes
- managing portfolio and research-based assessments with effective use of milestones, scaffolding, practice tests and one-on-one conferencing
- reviewing standards offered throughout the year based on changing needs and using 'student voice' to determine themes for learning and assessment
- increasing the use of digital technologies for gathering evidence of achievement
- preparing applications for special assessment conditions.

### **Solway College has effective processes and procedures for:**

- managing student appeals of assessment decisions
- enhancing credible assessment through consistent school-wide assessment practice on late and missed work, extensions, resubmissions and further assessment opportunities
- actively promoting excellence through a wide range of effective strategies including study skills programmes, peer assisted learning, family involvement and use of exemplars
- ensuring evidence for derived grades is gathered authentically through the use of standard-specific tasks
- meeting the requirements of the *Privacy Act 1993*.

**Assessing when ready** Senior managers encourage the practice of assessing students when ready, so they have every chance of producing their best efforts. This is achieved through the effective use of assessment calendars that ensure assessments are spread evenly across the year. Out-of-classroom tutorials, the availability of multi-level assessment tasks and a variety of assessment modes or topics are also used to enable assessment of individual students when they are ready. To further develop this practice, the school is encouraged to consider negotiating assessment deadlines when assignments are handed out and developing multiple tasks for time-bound assessments. This will further empower students to determine their own readiness for assessment.



**For consideration**

To extend good practice in meeting student needs and supporting assessment practice, the school is encouraged to consider:

- negotiating assessment deadlines with individual students, as appropriate
- teachers developing multiple tasks for time-bound assessments

## 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)*

### **Solway College has effective processes and procedures for managing internal moderation by:**

- ensuring that fit-for-purpose assessment materials are critiqued prior to use
- using team marking and verification of strategically selected student work to ensure judgements across all grades are consistent for all classes
- using subject specialists from within and beyond the school, to verify assessor judgements
- using benchmark exemplars and external moderation feedback from previous years to inform assessment decisions
- recording the completion of all moderation processes using the *Internal Moderation Cover Sheet*
- using a documented assurance process to monitor completion of the school's moderation procedures in each department, so that senior management is confident all reported results are quality assured.

### **Solway College has effective processes and procedures for managing external moderation by:**

- ensuring samples of student work are provided for external moderation by being appropriately stored immediately after the internal moderation process has been completed
- ensuring advice from external moderation is actioned before materials are used again
- using the NZQA moderation tool to appeal decisions in order to gain greater clarity of grade requirements at each level
- senior managers and subject leaders ensuring ongoing review of external moderation processes and outcomes.

**Developing digital submission** Solway College has set the goal of making online external moderation submissions in 2020, for all material that is completed digitally. Approximately 30 per cent of external moderation was submitted in digital format for the 2019 external moderation round. This will ensure that Solway College continues to develop its digital assessment and moderation processes in a manner that is realistic and compatible with its own growing capacity.

Senior managers have identified that maximising their digital submissions from 2020 onwards will enable them to further benefit from the many advantages of the fully online external moderation option. These include:

- the ability to send work in as soon as results have been reported to NZQA
- reducing the cost of courier bags
- timely moderator feedback for teachers
- access to a user-friendly appeal process

- less need for physical storage space in the school.

Solway College is confident that increased use of digital pedagogies for learning and assessment, including digital submissions for external moderation, will enable it to benefit further from NZQA's future focus.

**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)*

### **Solway College effectively uses assessment-related data to support achievement outcomes for students by:**

- using NCEA data to inform course and programme design to meet the needs, aspirations and abilities of all students
- using NZQA statistical reports to analyse results to inform school strategic goals and identify next steps
- empowering students to track their own progress by updating results and progress information in the student management system
- supporting students to use their NZQA Learner Login on a regular basis
- ensuring results from outside providers are reported using the correct provider code and ensuring that there is a current memoranda of understanding in place with all external providers.

### **Solway College reports accurate achievement data by:**

- using the NZQA Key Indicators to identify and resolve data issues
- using a range of effective checking mechanisms that involve teachers and students
- ensuring that internal entries are withdrawn, where appropriate, by the published due date and that all other entries submitted to NZQA have a reported result
- timely and regular reporting of results to NZQA.

**Successful mentoring in place for students** The school has embedded an effective mentoring programme, which uses current NCEA data to inform student goal setting, career pathways and their current progress towards completing qualifications. The programme involves individual teacher mentors and an Academic Facilitator, who is a point of contact for all mentors and students. This supportive mentoring culture is evidenced by all staff interviewed who considered they are also academic mentors and that this is a key part of their role as a teacher at Solway College. Students interviewed for this review feel the school's mentoring programme is highly beneficial and based on the strong achievement data, senior managers are certain it has a positive impact on overall academic success.

### **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))*

### **Solway College has effective processes and procedures for:**

- ensuring students receive outlines for all courses they undertake
- communicating consistent, up-to-date and easily accessed assessment information to students and their families through a range of media
- supporting teachers new to the school by including regular input from the Principal's Nominee in their induction programmes.

### **Solway College assists common understanding of assessment practice by:**

- ensuring students have a clear understanding of their responsibilities and rights regarding NCEA
- engaging families through a range of strategies including conferences, parent-teacher-student interviews and home visits, where appropriate
- facilitating NCEA discussions with whole staff, departments, and one-on-one meetings with the Principal's Nominee, to enhance shared understanding of assessment practice
- ensuring consistent school-wide practice as evident in the understanding of expectations by all teachers and students interviewed for the review
- fostering a professional environment where teachers have extensive subject support networks across the Wairarapa and throughout the country
- ensuring students understand what they need to achieve in order to gain a qualification.

**Clarifying assessment practice expectations in documentation** Even though teachers and students interviewed for the review articulated good practice and common understanding in these areas, staff documentation needs to be updated to clarify the following assessment practices. Documentation should:

- make a clear distinction between resubmissions and further assessment opportunities
- include the term, 'Derived Grades' instead of 'Compassionate Consideration' and clarify the processes.

### **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 documentation as outlined.