

Managing National Assessment Report

Buller High School

June 2019

What this report is about

This report summarises NZQA's review of how effectively Buller 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
- *Buller High School Operational Manual 2019* (Board of Trustees policy)
- *Buller High School Assessment Guidelines 2019* (Staff Handbook)
- *Buller High School Guidelines on Assessment for Students 2019*
- *Buller High School Senior Course Book 2019*
- a sample of course outlines for Years 11, 12 and 13.

The School Relationship Manager met with:

- the Principal's Nominee
- Heads of Department for:
 - English
 - Humanities
 - Pathways
 - Visual Arts
- three students.

There was a report-back session with the Principal, Executive Officer 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

Buller High School

26 June 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

Buller High School has implemented systems for assessment and moderation to ensure it reports credible results. The school's self-review is an embedded process that occurs at all levels. It is used to inform school goals and assessment course design to meet student needs. Areas for improvement are effectively identified and then actioned.

Assessment practice at the school is well managed. Staff are consistent in following the school's assessment policy and procedures. School-based courses provide opportunities for students to meet their qualification goals. External providers are used to deliver courses and provide further options for qualification pathways. Improvement to the process to identify and support students eligible for special assessment conditions has resulted in an increase in the number of students with entitlements.

The Principal's Nominee's monitoring of internal moderation provides assurance that all results reported to NZQA are credible. Issues identified from external moderation are addressed effectively through action plans developed between Heads of Department and the Principal's Nominee. Feedback from external moderation contributes to the ongoing development of assessment practice for teachers.

Data use effectively supports student achievement outcomes. Monitoring of student progress towards gaining a qualification has been strengthened. Students at risk of not reaching their qualification goals are identified and supported with individual assessment plans. Departments analyse assessment data to inform the effectiveness of their courses to meet student needs. Student entries and results accurate and reported to NZQA in a timely manner.

The school has a range of communication systems to inform staff and students about NCEA and school assessment procedures. The school has an experienced Principal's Nominee who staff and students are confident to approach for guidance.

Areas for improvement

Occasionally the school has been unable to provide work that has been requested for external moderation. Student material for external moderation should be appropriately stored, which includes being secure. The school should review its storage process to ensure all student work is available when requested.

To meet NZQA's requirements for access quality assured grades that could be used in the event of an emergency or other unexpected event, the school must submit to NZQA the grades that it holds prior to the external examinations. This will ensure that students will receive a grade if NZQA is required to activate the unexpected event grade process because of an unforeseen incident that disrupts external examinations.

The school should review course documentation to ensure students receive consistent information for all courses that they undertake. The school has a course outline template to ensure that consistent information is provided to students. However, its use is not embedded in all departments.

Students interviewed for this review were not aware of their right to appeal a grade or an assessment decision. To ensure that they are aware the school should check that students understand their right of appeal under the school's assessment policy and procedures.

Agreed action

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

- review the school process for storing student material for external moderation
- submit Unexpected Event Grades to NZQA prior to the beginning of external examinations
- ensure consistent course assessment information is provided to students
- check that students understand the school's appeals policy.

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13 August 2019

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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 10 August 2016 Managing National Assessment Report The school has adequately addressed the four action items from this report.

Response to external moderation outcomes Buller High School has an effective process to respond to external moderation outcomes. The Principal's Nominee discusses external moderation reports with each department. Action plans are developed and documented for those standards where an issue has been identified. Heads of Department are required to report to the Principal's Nominee when action plans are completed and outcomes are discussed. External moderation has assisted the school to identify and address areas for improvement with its internal moderation process, particularly for subject areas with ongoing problems of assessor judgements not being consistent with the standard. The school provides opportunities for professional learning and development to support teachers to improve their assessment judgements.

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's self-review processes are effective in identifying areas for ongoing improvement in assessment practice and procedures. Buller High School has an embedded practice of self-review that occurs at all levels of the school. Department analysis and evaluation of achievement results is used by senior management to inform school goals. Heads of Department and Senior Management review assessment practice and programmes at Curriculum Team Leader meetings. School-wide goals and course proposals are discussed here to ensure student assessment needs are being met.

The low number of students receiving special assessment conditions prompted the school to review its process for making applications to NZQA. Making applications using school evidence was investigated and trialled. However, the school found that it could provide better support for identified students using reports from an independent educational psychologist to make applications. To remove the cost to parents and potential inequity, the school's Board of Trustees provides the funding for the reports. Advice included in the reports assists teachers to develop strategies for support and provide appropriate assessments conditions. The number of students receiving special assessment conditions has increased as a result of this process.

In 2017 and 2018 the school trialled a dual system to monitor the internal moderation process. Along with the paper documentation, digital tools were trialled to make documentation more visible to staff and to provide transparency about whether it improved the process. However, the school found that this resulted in a decline in

quality assurance as the monitoring of documentation completed digitally was not as robust. The Principal's Nominee found that it was easier and more effective to monitor the paper version of the *internal moderation cover sheets* as they had to be physically passed to him once the moderation process was completed. A return to former process is providing the assurance that all results standards have been through the school's moderation process.

The ongoing review of student achievement has resulted in a restructuring of the process to monitor student progress towards qualifications. This is discussed further in the report.

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)

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

- providing differentiated assessment programmes within courses and across classes in the same subject
- using milestones checks and templates to make portfolio and research-based assessments more manageable
- extending assessment opportunities by using external providers to deliver assessment against individual standards related to career pathways.

Buller High School has effective processes and procedures for:

- ensuring credible assessment through consistent school-wide assessment practice on late and missed work, extensions, resubmissions, and further assessment opportunities
- using a range of strategies to ensure that student work is authentic
- ensuring derived grades are based on valid, authentic and standard specific evidence
- assisting with the efficient management of NZQA external examinations
- meeting the requirements of the *Privacy Act 1993*.

Extending qualification pathways By gaining accreditation to offer programmes for New Zealand Certificates Buller High School could extend the qualification pathways for its students. While the school uses external providers to extend assessment opportunities for standards that it does not have consent to assess, it has the potential to assess against programmes for New Zealand Certificates in some courses that it already offers, such as Tourism and Hospitality. This would benefit students as they could have an opportunity to achieve another qualification, alongside NCEA, while at the same time encouraging students to follow a vocational pathway.

Strengthen staff understanding of the resubmission process Staff understanding of the resubmission process can be strengthened. Some staff were uncertain about when to offer a resubmission and the appropriate amount of time given the context of the assessment. However, staff and students interviewed for the review confirmed that the school's practice followed NZQA's guidelines. Providing further guidance about different assessment opportunity contexts would strengthen understanding especially for teachers new to NCEA assessment.

Equity of access to Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) for Māori and Pacific students at Level 3 Buller High School recognises that improvement is required in this area. There is a historical pattern of low achievement for Māori students and this is reflected in their achievement of STEM subjects. The school has been focussing on improving the overall NCEA achievement for Māori boys, particularly the Level 1 literacy requirement. Recent staff turnover in STEM subjects has also had an impact and the school is hopeful that staff continuity will

help to improve student outcomes through strengthening staff and student relationships.

No action required

No issues with the school's management of assessment for national qualifications were identified during this review.

For consideration

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

- investigating the possibility and benefits of gaining accreditation to assess against programmes for New Zealand Certificates.

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)

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

- ensuring all assessment materials are critiqued prior to use to ensure they are valid and fit for purpose
- staff reviewing standard clarifications, and using NZQA and school exemplars to improve assessor judgements
- using subject specialists both within and outside the school to verify a purposefully selected sample of student work to ensure assessment judgements are consistent with the standard
- requiring Heads of Department to ensure internal moderation is completed for all standards assessed in their department and documented on an *internal moderation cover sheet* prior to reporting results to NZQA
- the Principal's Nominee reconciling completed *internal moderation cover sheets* with actual practice to monitor that internal moderation is happening.

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

- randomly selecting samples of student work for external moderation meeting NZQA requirements
- discussing external moderation feedback with teachers, documenting actions and monitoring these are completed
- teachers suggesting appropriate standards to be considered for inclusion in the moderation plan.

Review school process for the storage of student work Schools are required to retain student work for the purpose of external moderation. To ensure that work is available material should be appropriately stored, which includes being secured. A department identified from its self-review that student work was not adequately stored and for some standards material would not be available to provide if requested. This was yet to be resolved. Occasionally, other departments have been unable to provide work requested for external moderation. Storing material adequately requires it to be secure and its location known to the Principal's Nominee. Senior Management has agreed to review the school process for storing student material to ensure that it can be provided when requested for external moderation.

Agreed action

NZQA and senior management agree on the following action to improve the school's internal and external moderation to assure assessment quality. Senior management undertakes to:

- review the school process for storing student material 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)

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

- Heads of Department reporting
 - each term to the Board of Trustees on progress towards school NCEA goals
 - annually to the Principal and Board of Trustees an analysis of NCEA achievement, to inform strategic goals and actions
- Departments analysing assessment data to inform assessment programme design so that the standards offered match student needs.

Buller High School reports accurate achievement data by:

- reconciling results from external providers with which they hold a current memorandum of understanding, to ensure results are reported with the correct provider codes
- students attesting that their entries and results have been entered correctly, helping to ensure a low number of late entries for external examinations
- reporting results to NZQA on a timely and regular basis
- actively encouraging students to monitor their progress using the student portal on the student management system and the NZQA Learner Login
- using the Key Indicators and data file submission reports to identify and resolve data errors
- ensuring that internal entries are reported with a result or withdrawn, as appropriate.

Reporting Unexpected Event Grades to NZQA Assessment *Rule 5.6.c* requires schools to submit quality assured grades for all standards to be externally assessed prior to the start of the external examinations. Buller High School has processes to collect standard specific evidence for unexpected event grades. However, these have not been provided to NZQA as required. Submitting the grades prior to the start of the external examinations means that they are immediately available if NZQA is required to activate the unexpected event grade process because of an unforeseen event that disrupts NZQA external examinations. This ensures that students will receive a result if an unexpected event was to occur.

Monitoring student progress to improve student achievement The process to monitor student progress was changed to improve the identification of those requiring targeted support and support for all students. The school's house system was restructured so that house teachers are responsible for monitoring and mentoring fewer students than previously. House teachers now work more closely with their students to set achievement goals, provide advice on future pathways and track their progress towards qualifications. The Head of Pathways continually updates a live spreadsheet of student progress to provide house teachers with data to support ongoing academic conversations with students. Students at risk of not gaining

literacy and/or numeracy requirements for a qualification are identified and supported with individual assessment plans.

Agreed action

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

- submit Unexpected Event Grades to NZQA prior to the beginning of external examinations.

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))

Buller High School has effective processes and procedures for:

- ensuring students receive outlines for all course they undertake
- communicating NCEA information and school assessment policy and procedures to staff, students and their families through:
 - staff and student handbooks
 - the school website
 - emails
 - three-weekly newsletters
- reviewing communications to ensure they are fit for purpose and current.

Buller High School assists common understanding of assessment practice by:

- holding a professional development meeting at the beginning of each year for staff to discuss school assessment policies, procedures and NZQA updates
- holding student assemblies to inform them of school assessment policies and procedures
- inducting new staff to familiarise them with assessment and moderation processes and expectations.

Embed school-wide use of course outline template Schools must provide adequate and appropriate assessment information to students. This includes specific information about each course and how it contributes to an award or qualification. To assist with this, Buller High School has a common template for course outlines to ensure students are receiving consistent information. However, not all departments use the template. Senior management has agreed to ensure the use of the template is embedded so that students receive consistent information on the assessment practice in all subject areas.

Ensure students understand how to appeal an assessment decision Students interviewed for this review were unaware of their right to appeal assessment decisions and grades awarded. They are required to sign-off to accept their grades when assessments are returned but did not know that they could appeal if they disagreed with the grade or for any other assessment decision. So that the principles of natural justice and fairness apply, students should be aware of their right to appeal under the school's assessment policy and procedures. Senior management has agreed to check that students understand the school's procedure for appeals of assessment decisions.

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:

- ensure consistent course assessment information is provided to students
- check that students understand the school's appeals policy.