

Managing National Assessment Report

Avonside Girls' High School

September 2017

What this report is about

This report summarises NZQA's review of how effectively Avonside 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 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, in combination with the most recent Education Review Office report 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 2017* (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
- *Avonside Girls' High School Assessment Policy*
- *Avonside Girls' High School Gaining Qualifications Years 11, 12 and 13 2017 (Student Handbook)*
- *Avonside Girls' High School National Qualifications Framework Taumata Matauranga a-Motu Kua Taea Assessment Procedures Handbook for Staff 2017*
- a sample of course outlines for Years 11, 12 and 13.

The School Relationship Manager met with the Principal's Nominee and the Deputy Principal – Curriculum and Assessment, three students, and Heads of Learning Area for English, Health and Physical Education, Mathematics, Science, Social Science and The Arts.

There was a report-back session with the Principal, the Deputy Principal – Curriculum and Assessment 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

Avonside Girls' High School

27 September 2017

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 four years.

What the school is doing well

Effectively meeting the needs of students is the key principle driving assessment practice at Avonside Girls' High School. This focus informs school review and is underpinned by distributing leadership to build staff capacity, promoting student self-regulation and maintaining accountability. The use of student voice allows teachers to reflect on course design and delivery.

Teachers described a range of NCEA assessment practices that they use to allow the students to present their best evidence for assessment and to engage students in assessment activities. These practices include the individualisation of student assessment programmes, assessing students when ready, assessing "less, better" and collecting a range of evidence of student achievement.

The school has implemented a robust annual audit of internal moderation processes to ensure that only credible results are reported to NZQA. The outcomes of external moderation are documented, and action plans are developed and monitored when issues are identified.

Data is used to track achievement progress of all NCEA students, identify students at risk of not achieving a qualification, and to inform course design. Literacy and numeracy are actively targeted to ensure qualifications are attained. Effective monitoring of student progress towards personal goals occurs through Pouako and Kaitiaki mentoring.

A consistent school-wide approach to the management of assessment was found during the review. Assessment practice is effectively led by the Principal's Nominee who regularly fosters discussion on best practice and sets high expectations for staff. Staff acknowledged their professional respect for the Principal's Nominee and his approachability and solutions focus. School documentation of NCEA practices and national qualifications are reviewed and updated annually and provide clear direction of best practice. Senior leadership are supportive and work collaboratively to support student achievement.

Areas for improvement

The selection of student work for verification by some teachers was random. Clarification is needed that verification of student work should be purposefully selected at grade boundaries and sufficient to confirm assessment decisions are consistent with the standard. Purposeful selection will also better inform future assessment judgments and could reduce teacher workload.

Agreed action

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

- clarify student work for verification should be purposefully selected.

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20 November 2017

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FINDINGS OF THIS REVIEW

How effectively has the school responded to external and internal review?

External review

Evidence found that external review actions have been appropriately and effectively addressed. (CAAS Guidelines 2.6iv, 3v)

Action Items from 12 June 2014 Managing National Assessment Report The Principal's Nominee, working collaboratively with senior management and the staff, has lead the implementation of the actions agreed to during the previous review.

Response to agreed actions:

- The school has strengthened the appeals process, as discussed in the assessment practice section of this report.
- An annual moderation audit process has been developed, and is outlined in the moderation section of this report.
- Progress has been made to ensure that internal entries are reported with a result or withdrawn, as appropriate.
- The responsibility of Heads of Learning Area to report results and access student work of staff who have left the school, and the consultation process when assessment dates change, have now been documented in the staff handbook.
- Course outlines and the Board of Trustee's Assessment Policy include a privacy statement.
- The school now has a system for the reconciliation of results reported by outside providers and Memoranda of Understanding held by the school.

Response to external moderation outcomes Consistently high external moderation agreement rates reflect the school's effective response to external moderation feedback and robust internal moderation processes. The Principal's Nominee notifies teachers of the outcomes of external moderation. Heads of Learning Area and Senior Leadership designate formally discuss the external moderation reports for each selected standard and develop action plans to address issues identified. Agreed actions are monitored, and their completion is documented. External moderation feedback and actions are reported to the Principal.

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 school is continuously reviewing teaching, learning and assessment practice to best meet the diverse needs of students and provide opportunities to support students to present their best evidence of achievement. Assessment practice is being continuously evaluated to address learning issues that resulted from the Christchurch earthquakes, and in preparation to move into a new learning environment, from mid - 2019. The school-wide focus is on developing personalised, flexible NCEA

assessment to meet student needs and to take advantage of digital tools, while maintaining quality assurance.

The previous requirement for every student to be assessed in all standards offered in a course has been reviewed. Assessment programmes are differentiated and individualised to enable students to undertake an assessment course that meets their needs, including:

- providing differentiated assessment opportunities across classes in the same subject and within courses, including individual learning projects, courses composed of standards relevant to a theme, and multi-level classes
- tailoring the standards to be undertaken by a student in her assessment programme within a course, with guidance, to reflect individual abilities, interests, and future pathways
- where appropriate, assessing students when they are ready, providing ongoing feedback and feedforward information, and flexible timeframes
- scaffolding and contextualising assessment tasks so that they are more relevant, reflect cultural backgrounds, and assess against more than one standard, as appropriate
- extensive gathering of student voice to evaluate courses and inform changes to programmes, contexts and standards
- offering assessment programmes with fewer credits so students have the opportunity to “do less better”
- providing a double period extended learning time that offers opportunities for practical and performance based learning, and dedicated assessment time
- teaching strategies for effectively independent study and self-management, to assist with constant assessment pressure and deadlines
- pro-actively ensuring students with special assessment conditions are identified and resourced, led by the SENCO.

These initiatives indicate the school’s expanded capacity to undertake its own review of effective assessment practice for NCEA students. The school is explicitly addressing the challenges posed by more flexible assessment and wide-ranging evidence gathering, while maintaining robust quality assurance mechanisms and ensuring the credibility of the qualifications. Self-review is supported by a school-wide collaborative ownership of effective NCEA assessment practice. The school’s planned next step is to examine the feasibility of digital examinations, as practicable.

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 found that assessment practice is meeting student needs. (CAAS Guidelines 2.5v-vii, 2.6 I & ii and Assessment (including Examination) Rules for Schools with Consent to Assess 2017 5.5)

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

- supporting teachers to collect evidence of achievement in a variety of ways including naturally occurring, oral, presentation and digital
- engaging with outside providers to extend the school's capacity to provide a wide range of academic and vocational assessment opportunities
- supporting students to work toward a Vocational Pathway award by mapping Vocational Pathways standards to courses offered
- supported learning programmes for students identified as needing additional literacy and numeracy support, including in Year 9 and 10.

Avonside Girls' High School has effective processes and procedures for:

- consistent decision-making for missed, late and extension assessment decisions by the Heads of Learning Area, using an authorisation process
- monitoring the authenticity of student work through students and teachers using suitable strategies during the assessment and marking process, including a plagiarism tool
- reporting Not Achieved for proven breaches of authenticity and where students have had an adequate assessment opportunity but submitted no work
- providing valid resubmission and further assessment opportunities
- assuring valid, verifiable and standard-specific evidence for derived and emergency grades
- efficiently managing NZQA external examinations
- meeting the requirements of the *Privacy Act 1993*.

Strengthened appeal process A process to investigate student appeals of assessment decisions and breaches of rules has been established. The Principal's Nominee is not the sole or final arbiter. Students appeal to their teacher in the first instance, and if the appeal cannot be resolved, to the Head of Learning Area. If the matter is still unresolved, the Assessment Committee undertake a further, independent investigation and make the final decision. Prior to the Assessment Committee meeting, parents and/or caregivers will be contacted by telephone and fully informed of the circumstances of the appeal, or breach of assessment rules and a letter will subsequently provide notification of the decision of the Assessment Committee. The process is based on the principles of natural justice and students are apprised of their right to appeal. Documentation has been updated, including an appeal form, to reflect this strengthened process.

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 found that internal and external moderation are ensuring assessment quality. (CAAS Guidelines 2.6iii & vi, and Assessment (including Examination) Rules for Schools with Consent to Assess 2017 6.4b)

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

- documenting the critiquing and verification processes for each standard before results are reported
- making assessment judgements consistent with the standard by engaging with suitably-qualified subject specialists within or outside the school to verify student work
- encouraging teachers to use external subject for verification at least every two years as a professional learning opportunities to support assessment judgements
- keeping benchmark exemplars to inform future assessment decisions.

Avonside Girls' High School has effective processes and procedures for managing external moderation by:

- selecting samples of student work randomly to NZQA requirements
 - storing assessment materials and student work for all internally assessed standards to ensure samples are available
- valuing moderator's feedback for the clarification of grade boundaries and assistance with understanding of the standard.

Effective monitoring and audit of internal moderation processes Heads of Learning Area are responsible for ensuring internal moderation is undertaken and documented for all standards assessed in their learning area. Completed Internal Moderation Cover Sheets are submitted to the Principal's Nominee to confirm internal moderation has occurred.

The Principal's Nominee then audits each department using a checklist that comprehensively reconciles actual samples of student work with documentation. The audit has added value in strengthening the consistency of moderation processes across all learning areas, ensuring the reporting of credible results.

Selection of work for verification requires clarification Some Heads of Learning Area are randomly selecting student work for verification. Samples of marked student work for verification of assessor judgements should be purposefully selected at grade boundaries, rather than randomly selected, and sufficient to be confident marking is consistent with the standard across tasks, classes and years. Purposeful selection will assist with managing teachers' assessment workload and provide benchmarks to inform future assessor judgements.

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:

- clarify student work for verification should be purposefully selected.

How effectively does the school manage and make use of assessment-related data?

Evidence found that data management and use supports student achievement outcomes. (CAAS Guidelines 2.6v, 2.7i-iii)

Avonside Girls' High School effectively:

- **uses assessment-related data to support achievement outcomes for students by:**
 - using credit predictions to identify students at risk of not achieving literacy and numeracy requirements or a qualification
 - evaluating the effectiveness of assessment programmes to inform course design
 - analysing standard and subject results comparatively and longitudinally using a common template, so that staff can develop plans to address any variance
 - reporting to the Principal and Board of Trustees an analysis of NCEA achievement, including against school goals
 - supporting teaching as inquiry projects on improving student NCEA achievement
 - celebrating student achievement through academic awards and acknowledgement of success to engage them in the assessment process

- **reports accurate achievement data by:**
 - actively encouraging students to use the student management system portal, NZQA Learner login and NCEA app to track their NCEA and Vocational Pathways progress
 - using the Key Indicators and data file submission reports to identify and resolve data errors
 - timely reporting results to NZQA that have been checked for accuracy
 - reconciling reported results from external providers with Memoranda of Understanding on an annual basis
 - checking the accuracy of external entries prior to the 1 September data submission to ensure minimal late entries.

Academic counselling and support to improve achievement outcomes

Tracking and monitoring of achievement of all NCEA students has been strengthened through the introduction of vertical form groups that meet regularly. Students are placed in a form class, with an Ako teacher, who works collaboratively with the Kaitiaki. They coach and mentor each student, through tailored conversations using current data from the student management system. Students are supported to manage assessment workloads, personal achievement goals and progress towards completing qualifications. Identified 'at risk students' are supported with personalised assessment programmes. Whānau and aiga are included in decisions about changes to assessment plans.

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 found that school communication ensures understanding about assessment. (CAAS Guidelines 2.4i(f), 2.4v, 2.6vii, 2.7iib)

Avonside Girls' High School has effective processes and procedures for:

- widely distributing information on financial assistance to cover all students who are eligible
- inducting new Heads of Learning Areas and teachers new to the school to familiarise them with the school's assessment and moderation processes, and to use the student management system.

Avonside Girls' High School assists common understanding of assessment practice by:

- discussing NCEA information at staff and Curriculum and Assessment leader's meetings, whānau hui, Pasifika fono, *Understanding NCEA* evenings, and tailored year level meetings, and the school's website.

Competent management and clear communication of assessment practice

Effective leadership and communication of NCEA assessment procedures and processes has facilitated shared ownership of assessment systems at all levels of the school's operation. Robust discussion and sharing of ideas across the staff supports the development of best assessment practice. Assessment processes, such as the appropriate use of resubmission and further assessment opportunities, are the subject of targeted professional learning. Pro-active use of digital, face-to-face, and written communication opportunities ensure assessment information is accessible to all stakeholders and understood.

Communication is annually reviewed and is digitalised on the online learning management system and website to ensure documentation is current and fit for purpose.

The staff and student handbooks are user-friendly, concise, plain English documents, covering key information. Clear direction of best practice, such as authenticity strategies, and inclusion of Myth Busters and external moderation application instructions in the staff handbook supports consistent application of assessment policies and NZQA requirements.

The students interviewed identified a thorough knowledge of what is needed to gain a qualification and school assessment procedures, as well as the ready access to NCEA information via teachers, the Principal's Nominee, and documentation. They also acknowledged the support provided by staff to assist students to present their best evidence of achievement.

Standardise Course Statements Course statements provide subject-specific assessment information as well as generic information which can be found in the student handbook. The school's student management system can produce standardised assessment statements with a range of information on the standards assessed within each course, including whether they contribute towards literacy, numeracy or University Entrance reading and/or writing. Requiring all departments to use a common template would enable students and parents to easily access the course-related information in a succinct and consistent format across all subjects.

The school should consider making these statements available to students and parents.

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:

- using the student management system to provide consistent course assessment information to students and parents.