

# Managing National Assessment Report

## Geraldine High School

September 2019

## What this report is about

This report summarises NZQA's review of how effectively Geraldine 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 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 each 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
- *Assessment and Moderation Procedure 2019* (Staff handbook)
- *Geraldine High School Assessment Policy and Procedure Documents 1.0 -1.16 2019*
- *Geraldine High School NCEA Good Practice Guide for Teachers*
- *Geraldine High School MNA Improvement Plan 2019*
- *Geraldine High School Strategic Plan 2017-2020*
- Student Assessment Information 2019 (Student Handbook)
- a sample of course booklets for Years 11, 12 and 13.

The School Relationship Manager met with:

- the Principal's Nominee
- the Deputy Principal
- Heads of Department for:
  - English
  - Health and Physical Education
  - Outdoor Education
  - Social Sciences
  - Technology

There was a report-back session with the Principal, Deputy 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

## Geraldine High School

19 September 2019

### Significant issues found

This review found a significant issue that the school must address to meet the requirements of the *Consent to Assess Against Standards on the Directory of Assessment Standards Rules 2011*.

The next Managing National Assessment review will be conducted within one year to check that these issues are being addressed and that quality management of assessment for qualifications has improved.

The issue is a need to:

- monitor that all assessment is internally moderated before results are submitted to NZQA.

### Actions required to address significant issues

In order to address these issues, the school must:

- internally moderate to ensure assessment results are credible (*CAAS Guidelines 2.6iii*)
- monitor internal moderation systems to ensure that only results that have been subject to the internal moderation process are reported to NZQA (*Assessment Rules for schools with Consent to Assess 2019, 6.4(b)*).

### What the school is doing well

Geraldine High School offers a diverse range of assessment programmes and pathways to serve its predominantly rural student population. It has strong ties to feeder schools and its strategic goals are well aligned to those of Ka Awa Whiria Kāhui Ako.

The school is currently carrying out a two-year curriculum review concluding in 2021. Staff, student and community voice is being collected with the aim of better meeting the needs and aspirations of all stakeholders. Senior management is investigating a best fit model for its own context by reviewing curriculum structures in other successful schools. Those interviewed report confidence in the effectiveness of the school's review process; a view shared by the Board of Trustees.

Since the last review, the school has introduced parent-teacher conference days, creating stronger links between home and school, and enabling parents to become better informed about their student's progress and pathways. Vertical form teachers provide academic counselling and pastoral support for a small number of students and are responsible for supporting them towards their qualifications goal. The Pastoral, Academic and Careers team, including the school social worker, and the Specialist Learning Committee, track target student progress, manage referrals from classroom teachers and access additional support as required.

The newly appointed Principal's Nominee has worked diligently to review and improve documentation supporting teachers' assessment and moderation practice and procedures. The addition of a flow chart hyperlinked to forms and relevant sections of the NZQA website has improved the overall coherence of the process. Teachers are being encouraged and supported to store and submit their evidence for external moderation digitally. Course booklets are under review to ensure they are more concise and consistently formatted to improve communication about NCEA for students and caregivers.

### **Areas for improvement**

Although it was agreed in the 2016 Managing National Assessment review that student work for verification would be purposefully selected around grade boundaries, this good practice is still not applied consistently across all departments. Similarly, some departments routinely record verification discussions around grade boundaries on the *Internal Moderation Cover Sheets* to inform future assessor judgments and to provide evidence of internal moderation. However, this is yet to be embedded across all departments.

In some instances, teachers have sent more samples for grade verification than necessary to provide assurance to NZQA that assessment is credible. It is recommended that teachers are guided to use strategic selection, where appropriate, to better manage verifier workload. Where over-verification does occur, it should be done knowingly and willingly for the purpose of improving assessors' understanding of a standard's grade boundaries.

The school must develop a monitoring system to provide assurance to NZQA that in any given year, all standards for which the school has reported results, have been internally moderated. The Principal's Nominee's department audits provide an opportunity to reconcile documentation with actual practice.

### **Agreed action**

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

- ensure all departments verify student work around grade boundaries and record these discussions.

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14 November 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 2vi, 3iv-3v)*

**Action Items from 31 August 2016 Managing National Assessment Report** The Principal's Nominee has created an Improvement Plan which tracks the progress of actions taken to address issues from the last Managing National Assessment review. The school has addressed three of the four agreed actions from the 2016 review by:

- ensuring that the randomly selected samples of student work for external moderation are not further verified
- reviewing course outline information provided to students as advised, so the format is more consistent and concise
- updating the staff and student handbooks as agreed in the report.

However, more action is needed to strengthen the following:

- clarify with all departments that student work for verification should be purposefully selected around grade boundaries. (This is discussed further in the Moderation section of this report)

**Response to external moderation outcomes** The Principal's Nominee shares the external moderation reports with Heads of Department and uses a response form to document and monitor the completion of actions undertaken to address any issues.

Since the last review, the school's assessment decisions have been mostly consistent with NZQA moderators' judgements, with a slight dip from 2018 to 2019. This reflects a lack of experience or familiarity with the standards in some subject areas, which the Principal's Nominee and management are managing. Where internal grade verification has produced a pattern of inconsistency over several years, the school is encouraged to review moderation practice to improve assessor 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)*

In response to a combination of internal and external influences, Geraldine High School is currently undertaking a comprehensive curriculum review to ensure its curriculum structures are fit for purpose, relevant and engaging, in order to support its mission "to meet the educational needs of all our students to equip them for positive and successful lives."

In order to better meet the unique abilities, aspirations and needs of their students, the school is currently researching contemporary curriculum structures and practices in other successful schools to find a best-fit model to suit its own context. The aim is to implement changes to what and how the curriculum is delivered so that courses are relevant and engaging, and meet students' needs well into the future. Enhancing outcomes for those on academic pathways remains very much in focus. The school has sought input from staff, students and families in the school community, as it works towards prioritising and refining its strategic goals for improvement. Under review are:

- project-based learning and cross-curricular approaches
- compulsory versus optional subjects
- the weekly timetable
- the length of teaching periods.

To support the roll out of the Digital Curriculum and meet its goal of preparing students for a future digital world, the whole school moved to Bring Your Own Device in 2019. This reflects the increasing digital citizenship of students from feeder primary schools. Teachers are supported by an e-learning committee and are receiving targeted Professional Learning and Development to progressively incorporate more online teaching and assessment from 2020.

This review is currently 'in progress' and due to conclude in 2021. The school has a supportive Board of Trustees and close ties with feeder schools that have full confidence in the effectiveness of the school's review processes.

### **No action required**

No issues with the school's response to external review 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)*

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

- appointing vertical form teachers to work with a small groups of students three to four times weekly to provide academic counselling and pastoral care
- introducing three-way conferences to assist students to formulate learning goals, plan courses in line with their chosen pathways and to evaluate progress throughout the year or make referrals for ongoing support where required
- creating the Specialist Learning Committee to handle referrals from teachers concerned about students' academic progress and organise appropriate support in a timely manner
- using a Ministry of Education expert to mentor and support Māori students in Level 2
- differentiating assessment and tailoring assessment opportunities to suit individuals within a course and assessing students when they are ready
- introducing South Pacific Educational Courses leading to the Level 1 New Zealand Certificate in Foundation Skills and New Zealand Skills for Living qualifications to support high priority students towards the completion of an NCEA certificate
- extending vocational and alternative pathways through Gateway, STAR and the Primary Industry Academy, and making the most of the local environment through the Outdoor Education programme
- using external providers such as, Te Aho o Te Kura Pounamu and the Virtual Learning Network to deliver assessment and courses the school does not have the capacity to offer.

### **Geraldine High School has effective processes and procedures for:**

- managing authenticity through a shared understanding of process and strategies for staff and students
- managing missed and late assessment and breaches of the assessment rules
- dealing with appeals of assessment related decisions
- clarifying the time for final submissions to provide greater clarity and equity for staff and students
- ensuring derived and unexpected event grades are based on authentic standard-specific evidence from practice examinations or other appropriate assessment
- meeting the requirements of the *Privacy Act 1993*.



### **Improved literacy and numeracy key to improving attainment in NCEA**

Geraldine High School's strategic goals are aligned with those of the Ka Awa Whiria Kāhui Ako. Their joint challenge is to accelerate progress and achievement in writing and Mathematics for Years 7 to 10, and for boys and Māori in particular, with a view to reducing disparity for these two groups in NCEA. The school believes improved writing literacy skills will strengthen academic writing and improve attainment of NCEA Levels 2 and 3.

**Strong wrap around support for target students** In addition to the support every student receives from their vertical form teacher, there is an additional layer of academic and pastoral support. The Pastoral, Academic and Careers team, including the school social worker, and the Specialist Learning Committee, track target student progress, manage referrals from classroom teachers and access additional support as required. Diagnostic and achievement data is constantly tracked and monitored by the Academic Dean to ensure all students at risk of not gaining a qualification receive support. The pastoral Dean of each year level meets with all teachers of that year group, on a termly basis, to monitor student progress and implement interventions, including, referrals to the Academic Dean, Specialist Learning Committee and school social worker.

### **Initiatives to improve equity of outcomes in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM)**

Geraldine High School's Māori student achievement at Year 13 in one to three STEM subjects reflects the school's initiatives and proactive support for Māori students to engage with and be successful in these subjects.

Interventions to improve equity of outcomes include:

- removing entry requirements so that students with potential may continue with a subject despite poor performance in the year prior
- engaging an advisor to mentor Māori students in Year 12
- adjusting the balance between internal and external credits, as well as reducing overall credits to better manage workload
- personalising programmes so a student can study an out-of-line STEM subject under the supervision of a STEM teacher.

### **School evidence used to identify more students eligible for Special**

**Assessment Conditions** The new Assistant Head of Learning Support and the Principal's Nominee have worked effectively to identify students eligible for Special Assessment Conditions. Earlier identification of eligibility at junior level assists planning and preparation for additional support for these students' when they undertake NCEA assessment.

### **No action required**

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

## How effectively does the school's internal and external moderation assure assessment quality?

*Evidence for internal and external moderation ensuring assessment quality. (CAAS Guidelines 2.6iii & vi, and Assessment (including Examination) Rules for Schools with Consent to Assess 2019 6.4b)*

### **Geraldine High School has effective processes and procedures for managing internal moderation by:**

- critiquing all assessment materials prior to use to ensure they are valid and fit for purpose
- using suitable subject specialists from within or outside the school to verify assessor judgements.

### **Geraldine High School has effective processes and procedures for managing external moderation by:**

- selecting samples of student work to NZQA requirements
- encouraging teachers to store and send samples of student work provided for external moderation digitally
- using a Response to External Moderation form to document and monitor the completion of actions undertaken to address issues identified in external moderation reports
- requesting that standards with low agreement with NZQA moderators are added to the moderation plan to ensure that the necessary changes have improved assessor judgements.

**Effective monitoring needed to assure that internal moderation is consistent and credible** The newly appointed Principal's Nominee has relied on the professionalism of her colleagues to internally moderate all standards before results are reported to NZQA. However, this review found the requirement for schools to undertake quality assurance by internally moderating every standard assessed each year had not been followed consistently by some departments. A monitoring system is required to reconcile documentation with actual practice.

This rule also applies to standards subject to an external moderation system undertaken by an Industry Training Organisation. All standards are subject to NZQA's internal moderation rules and must be included in the monitoring system to be implemented by the Principal's Nominee.

It was evident in this review that some departments have effective systems for managing moderation and purposefully select student work at grade boundaries for verification as suggested by NZQA. All departments should follow this good practice, including documenting grade verification discussions on the *Internal Moderation Cover Sheet* to inform future judgements.

### **Focus on reducing workload by considering sufficiency of grade verification**

Staff require further clarification on NZQA's guidelines for sufficiency of grade verification as some departments interviewed send more samples of student work for verification than NZQA requires to assure assessment is credible. There is no predetermined number of pieces of student work that must be verified. The sample size is best determined using a strategic selection process, where the number of pieces selected will vary according to the depth of assessor experience, feedback from previous external moderation, the availability of good quality grade boundary exemplars, and the number of students assessed. This has the potential to lessen the workload of verifiers.

### **Required action**

The following actions are required to improve the school's internal and external moderation to assure assessment quality. The school must:

- internally moderate to ensure assessment results are credible (CAAS Guidelines 2.6iii)
- monitor internal moderation systems to ensure that only results that have been subject to the internal moderation process are reported to NZQA (Assessment Rules for schools with Consent to Assess 2019, 6.4b).

### **Agreed action**

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

- ensure all departments verify student work around grade boundaries and record these discussions.

### **For consideration**

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

- using strategic selection for grade verification.

## **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)*

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

- identifying students in Years 7 to 10 who may require literacy support to access Level 6 of the curriculum in Year 11 and those eligible for Special Assessment Conditions for NCEA assessment
- enabling the Academic Dean to:
  - track and monitor student progress toward NCEA qualifications
  - identify students at risk
  - negotiate programme changes as appropriate
- requiring Heads of Department to complete an annual analysis of NCEA achievement data for the Principal and Board of Trustees measuring performance against department and school strategic goals
- using achievement data to inform teaching and assessment programmes and future strategic goals and actions.

### **Geraldine High School reports accurate achievement data by:**

- supporting all senior students to register and use their Learner Login
- submitting results to NZQA on a regular and timely basis
- using the Key Indicators to identify and resolve data submission errors
- ensuring all internal entries are reported with a result or are withdrawn, as appropriate
- ensuring all students acknowledge acceptance of the grade awarded
- holding current memoranda of understanding with external providers in an online folder and reconciling them with entries.

### **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 about assessment.  
(CAAS Guidelines 2.4i(f), 2.4v, 2.6vii, 2.7ii(b))*

### **Geraldine High School has effective processes and procedures for:**

- ensuring students receive course booklets including University Entrance eligibility (where appropriate) and literacy/numeracy status of individual standards
- communicating assessment policy and procedure to students through a variety of channels including:
  - the student diary (digital and print versions)
  - NCEA information sessions and NCEA video content on the school website
  - the student portal to the student management system
  - email, the school newsletters and Facebook page
  - three-way conferences with parents and the vertical form teacher
- assisting parents and students making subject choices by holding the subject choice evening the evening before parent-teacher conference day
- supporting teachers by storing all assessment and moderation information in one online folder and streamlining processes in a flow chart with hyperlinks to associated documentation for ease of reference.

### **Geraldine High School assists common understanding of assessment practice by:**

- providing opportunities for staff to discuss assessment best practice, including findings from external review
- supporting teachers new to Geraldine High School with a formal induction and mentoring programme covering NCEA practice and procedures
- reporting student progress to parents through formal reports and face to face conferencing
- promoting student understanding of what they need to achieve in order to gain a qualification.

### **No action required**

No issues with the way in which the school maintained the currency of assessment policy and procedures, and communicated them to staff, students and families were identified during this review.