

Managing National Assessment Report

Timaru Girls' High School

March 2020

What this report is about

This report summarises NZQA's review of how effectively Timaru Girls' High School:

- has addressed issues identified through NZQA's Managing National Assessment review and through the school's own internal review
- manages assessment practice for national qualifications
- manages internal and external moderation
- makes use of and manages assessment-related data
- maintains the currency of assessment policy and procedures, and communicates them to staff, students and families.

The summary section evaluates the school's overall effectiveness and provides a broad overview of the review's key findings for all readers. The remaining sections provide detail of these findings for school managers.

Why we review how schools are managing national assessment

The purpose of a Managing National Assessment review is:

- to confirm, in combination with the most recent Education Review Office report, that schools are meeting the requirements of the *Consent to Assess Against Standards on the Directory of Assessment Standards Rules 2011* (CAAS) and its *Guidelines* (CAAS Guidelines) in order to maintain their consent to assess; and
- to help schools achieve valid, fair, accurate and consistent internal assessment according to the requirements of the *Assessment (including Examination) Rules for Schools with Consent to Assess 2020* (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
- *Timaru Girls' High School, NZQA Assessment Procedures Staff Information 2020* (student handbook)
- *Timaru Girls' High School, NZQA Assessment Procedures Student Information 2020* (staff handbook)
- *Timaru Girls' High School Strategic Plan 2020-2022*
- a range of policies supporting student assessment and achievement
- a sample of course outlines for Years 11, 12 and 13.

The School Relationship Manager met with:

- the Principal's Nominee/Deputy Principal
- Heads of Learning Area for:
 - English
 - Mathematics
 - Physical Education and Health
 - Science
 - Social Sciences
 - Technology
- three 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

Timaru Girls' High School

12 March 2020

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.

At the request of NZQA, and with the school's agreement, this review was rescheduled from 2019.

What the school is doing well

Timaru Girls' High School has an inclusive culture which celebrates diversity and acknowledges student achievement. The newly appointed Principal and Senior Leadership Team have responded to external review and identified some areas for immediate attention.

The key focus for staff professional development in 2020-2021 is the implementation of a *Positive Behaviour for Learning* framework to enhance student success across the school and build on the school's already strong sense of community and positive learning culture. The Senior Leadership Team believes *PB4L* will enable teachers to develop more consistent expectations around student behaviour, leading to improved learning outcomes and attainment for all students, as well as enhancing students' employability.

A strategic goal linked to the implementation of *PB4L* is to create an "*inclusive learning environment where strong relationships and student well-being is paramount and everyone is valued and supported.*" In 2020, the school appointed three additional student leaders to improve the sense of connectedness for International, Pacific and Māori students. The school will gather comparative data and survey staff and student voice to evaluate the impact of these initiatives on learning outcomes, engagement and behaviour and to determine next steps for 2021 and beyond.

The school has maintained levels of attainment above national levels and those of similar schools, with the majority of students gaining an NCEA qualification. Assessment processes are effectively managed to meet the qualifications needs of students. The school provides a degree of differentiated assessment through multilevel study, alternative course choices in certain subject areas and some personalisation of courses for identified students. Assessment opportunities are extended by using external providers to offer courses and standards the school does not have the capacity to deliver. Identified students are provided with approved special assessment conditions and appropriately supported. These all contribute towards assisting students to improve their assessment outcomes.

Student progress is tracked and monitored by the Academic Director in conjunction with a support network of Deans, Form Teachers, Careers Advisor and the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator. This team oversees Course Confirmation in Term 1 where the focus is on appropriate pathway planning. Two further three-way conferences with students and their whānau take place in Terms 2 and 3 to evaluate progress and provide appropriate academic counselling. Regular checks on attendance and achievement data by the Deans is planned for 2020 to expand the monitoring process.

Senior leadership monitors internal and external moderation through the completion of centrally held online tracking sheets and an annual audit of each Learning Area. This provides an attestation to management that all standards have been through a robust process of internal moderation. The school has systems in place to document and monitor completion of actions undertaken to address issues identified in external moderation reports.

Data management and analysis support student achievement outcomes. To minimise errors, students check and sign to confirm that their grades are accurate after each assessment and towards the end of the year. The Board of Trustees receives regular, comprehensive reporting on student achievement, and Learning Area Heads analyse NCEA data to inform strategic goals and actions. Student entries and the reporting of results are timely, complete and accurate.

The school utilises a range of communication channels that allow staff, students and their families to gain a common understanding of NCEA and school assessment procedures and whānau can monitor progress through the Parent Portal to the student management system.

Areas for improvement

In recent years there have been several staffing changes in middle leadership. This disruption has created the potential for risk to the credibility of assessment practice around resubmissions in one learning area. In order to ensure assessment practice is consistent and conforms to NZQA's requirements, staff need to be reminded that where evidence is gathered by portfolio, or over an extended period, the use of checkpoints and feedback/feedforward will usually remove the need for a resubmission.

Although the staff handbook mentions the practice of 'purposeful selection' for the purpose of grade verification, this is not followed consistently in all Learning Areas. There is no pre-determined number of samples required by NZQA for grade verification. That number should be determined by factors such as, assessor experience, feedback from external moderation, the availability of good quality grade boundary exemplars and the number of students assessed. This has the potential to reduce workload for verifiers. In addition, where a Learning Area has had a pattern of inconsistency with external moderation, a review of the appropriateness of the verifier should be considered.

This review identified that some staff still lack an understanding of the need to verify grades awarded on a purposefully selected student work around grade boundaries for internal moderation. Discussions around grade boundaries should be recorded on the school's internal moderation cover sheet to improve teachers' understanding of the standards they assess and help inform future judgements.

To ensure that assessment practice is current and up to date, it is recommended that the staff and student handbooks are updated annually to reflect NZQA requirements. The Principal's Nominee is planning to refresh both the staff and student handbooks and to make each more accessible and user-friendly for the target user.

Agreed actions

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

- clarify teachers' understanding of NZQA's resubmission requirements
- ensure all staff follow the process involved in verifying student work around grade boundaries and ensure all staff are aware of NZQA's verification requirements for sufficiency.

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15 May 2020

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 28 September 2016 Managing National Assessment Report

The school has addressed the three agreed actions from the 2016 review by:

- ensuring that internal moderation is monitored annually so that Senior Management have confidence that all reported results are quality assured
- developing a process to ensure that memoranda of understanding are held for all outside providers
- continuing to work on improvements to the staff and student handbooks in terms of currency and accessibility.

Response to external moderation outcomes Since 2017, there has been a decline in the overall consistency of the school's external moderation outcomes. In response, the newly appointed Principal's Nominee has developed a centrally held tracking sheet which identifies standards where moderators found teacher judgements to be "*not consistent*" or "*not yet consistent*", and records the required action and the person responsible for signing off its completion. A next step would be to complete an evaluation of the effectiveness of the intervention. Some Learning Area Heads routinely use external verifiers which has strengthened their grade verification process. Where a verifier produces a pattern of inconsistency over time, the relevant Learning Area Head should review the appropriateness of the verifier.

Response to data issues In line with the Education Review Office (ERO) 25 February 2020 review findings, the school is developing a more "*systematic approach to gathering, analysing and reporting schoolwide progress.*" This is discussed further in the body of this report.

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 newly formed Senior Leadership Team is focused on building a culture of "*organisational renewal*" through a process of "*robust self-review.*" In 2019, the school identified what was working well and what could be improved, subsequently refreshing the 2020-2022 strategic plan. A key strategic goal for the school is to create an "*inclusive learning environment where strong relationships and student well-being is paramount, and everyone is valued and supported.*" To this end, the school is implementing the *Positive Behaviour for Learning (PB4L)* framework to enhance student success by improving engagement, learning and behaviour in the classroom. Although the school already enjoys a positive learning environment and a strong sense of community, the Senior Leadership Team is keen to build on this to create more positive outcomes for all students by creating greater consistency around teacher professional practice and students' behavioural expectations.

The school is using *PB4L* Set data, and staff and student surveys to evaluate the impact of *PB4L* on student success. The expectation is that *PB4L* will strengthen student engagement with learning, boost endorsements at Levels 2 and 3, improve the numbers leaving with Level 2 NCEA or better; and improve students' readiness for employment or Tertiary study. A large representative committee ensures that the roll out of *PB4L* meets staff and students' needs alike and monitors this through regular staff and student surveys.

In 2019, levels of attainment at Levels 1 and 3 dipped necessitating a review of the school's tracking and academic mentoring processes. The Principal's Nominee is developing a tool to give the Academic Director and Deans a more effective predictor of student success. This will be used in conjunction with academic counselling to enable staff to plan interventions for students at risk of not meeting their qualifications goals. A shortened study leave period is planned to enable teachers to work with priority students by providing targeted support, including additional assessment opportunities.

Additionally, in 2019 several Year 11 students fell narrowly short of gaining Level 1 NCEA. The Principal has identified that by extending Form Time, Form Teachers could be more effective as academic mentors and better support students to manage their workload to meet their qualifications goals. Although the school's timetable is currently synchronised with that of Timaru Boys' High School, which constrains the length and frequency of Form Time, the possibility of extending the time available for academic mentoring by the Form Teacher is under review.

Since the last review, the school has sought to improve its sense of connectedness for International, Pacific and Māori students believing that a more inclusive learning environment will have a positive impact on outcomes and help address disparities in achievement for students in these groups. In order to give these students greater visibility in the school, three additional student leaders have been appointed to raise the profile of International, Pacific and Māori students. A Cultural Committee supports this goal by helping the new student leaders to plan events throughout the year where cultural diversity can be promoted and celebrated.

The school's process of self-review illustrates its capacity to implement and evaluate changes designed to strengthen its core values and enhance all students' opportunities for success. The newly formed Senior Leadership Team has the capacity to identify assessment-related issues and make an appropriate response with the support of both staff and students.

No action required

No issues with the school's response to NZQA external reviews 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 2020 5.5)

Timaru Girls' High School has effective processes and procedures for meeting the assessment needs of its students by:

- differentiating assessment programmes to enable students to undertake assessment that meets their individual needs, interests and future pathways, through:
 - alternative courses in Level 1-3 English, Mathematics and Science that focus on internally assessed standards and literacy/numeracy requirements; alongside courses offering both internal and external standards
 - personalised programmes for students to meet their learning needs and/or qualifications goals, where necessary
 - flexible timeframes and assessing students when ready, where manageable
- having every senior student meet with the Academic Director, Dean and Careers Advisor to confirm courses and set goals during Course Confirmation in Term 1, followed by three-way conferences with whānau in Terms 2 and 3 to check academic progress towards each student's goals
- extending assessment opportunities by using external providers such as Te Aho o Te Kura Pounamu, NetNZ and partnering with Timaru Boys' High School in a reciprocal arrangement to provide courses the school is unable to offer
- offering a range of vocational programmes through STAR, Gateway and Vocational Pathways (VPath) courses through Ara (Aoraki Polytechnic)
- ensuring all Learning Area Heads complete the *Derived Grade Quality Assurance Attestation Form* following the practice examinations to confirm evidence for a derived grade is valid
- supporting applications for students eligible for special assessment conditions with school-based evidence and ensuring the provision of their entitlement for internal assessment, where appropriate.

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

- managing and monitoring academic integrity through the application of a range of digital tools capable of detecting inauthentic content
- managing missed and late assessment and breaches of the assessment rules
- responding to student appeals for check marking
- ensuring evidence for derived grades is based on standard specific and quality assured assessment
- meeting the requirements of the *Privacy Act 1993*.

Clarify appropriate conditions for resubmission In one subject area, teachers reported offering resubmissions for work gathered over an extended period of time creating inconsistency between Learning Areas and potentially compromising the credibility of the assessment. In courses where evidence is gathered by portfolio, or over an extended period, the use of checkpoints and feedback/feedforward will usually negate the need for a resubmission.

Equity for Māori and Pacific students in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) subjects The Senior Leadership team has noted the disparity in engagement in STEM subjects at Year 13 between Māori and Pacific students and students of other ethnicities. The school maintains Science as a compulsory subject at Year 11 and numbers of Māori students achieving success in one Level 3 STEM subject gradually increased over the five-year period up to 2018. Although there are no specific actions for equity in STEM for the target group, Māori and Pacific students benefit from small class sizes, the availability of subject specialist teachers and efforts in all Learning Areas to improve levels of engagement for all students.

Agreed action

NZQA and senior management agree on the following action to improve the management of assessment for national qualifications. Senior management undertakes to:

- clarify teachers' understanding of NZQA's resubmission requirements.

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 2020 6.4b)

Timaru Girls' 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
- implementing a shared online *Internal Moderation Tracking Sheet* to allow Senior Leadership Team to track and monitor internal moderation processes across the school
- having the Principal's Nominee visit all Learning Areas for a mini Managing National Assessment audit at least once a year to check internal moderation processes meet NZQA requirements.

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

- selecting samples of student work randomly to NZQA requirements
- ensuring samples of student work and accompanying documentation are available for submission by being adequately stored
- encouraging and supporting teachers to use digital storage where possible
- monitoring external moderation reports to identify emerging trends and potential issues in a Learning Area.

Clarify verification processes with all staff This review found some Learning Areas routinely send eight or more samples of marked work for grade verification and some mentioned selecting random samples. To avoid over-verification and to reduce the workload of verifiers, a few samples of work on grade boundaries is sufficient to meet NZQA's internal moderation requirements.

To align practice across all Learning Areas, student work should be purposefully selected around grade boundaries for internal moderation. The practice of including verification discussions on, or with the internal moderation cover sheet is embedded in some Learning Areas. This good practice is recommended to improve teachers' understanding of the standards they assess and help inform future judgements.

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 staff follow the process involved in verifying student work around grade boundaries and ensure all staff are aware of NZQA's verification requirements for sufficiency.

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)

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

- requiring Learning Area Heads to report to the Principal and Board of Trustees an analysis of NCEA achievement to inform strategic goals and actions
- using NZQA statistical reports and analysing results comparatively and longitudinally to inform decisions about future course content and design
- identifying Year 9 and 10 students needing support to meet their future NCEA literacy and numeracy requirements.

Timaru Girls' High School reports accurate achievement data by:

- having all students check their grades before they are sent to NZQA, both at the conclusion of each assessment and again before year end
- ensuring all internal entries are reported with a result or are withdrawn, as appropriate
- using the Key Indicators to identify and resolve data submission errors
- checking entries in externally assessed standards to limit late entries.

Tutorials for students to learn how to access their NZQA Learner Login The Principal's Nominee is organising training to enable students to register and use their Learner Login so all senior students can:

- check that entries and results have been reported accurately to NZQA
- make requests for review and/or reconsideration of external examination papers
- order certificates and their Record of Achievement.

Develop better systems to measure, track and report on student progress The school has identified it needs to review and improve systems for evaluating which teaching practices have a positive impact on improving student outcomes. The Academic Director identified that information about how teachers use data to inform practice could be strengthened. The school has responded by creating a more systematic approach for recording, tracking and reporting student achievement progress in the student management system. To provide a more comprehensive picture of a student's progress, Overall Teacher Judgements will be added bi-annually and Learning Area Heads will report bi-annually to the Senior Leadership Team and the Academic Director on student achievement and progression. This will allow for more timely and appropriate interventions for any student at risk of not reaching her qualifications goal.

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))

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

- providing all students with a hard copy of the student handbook
- providing consistent course assessment statements and an overview of all courses in the *Senior Course Booklet*, available in hard copy or online
- informing all parents and caregivers about NCEA matters and assessment policy and procedures through a variety of channels:
 - the school website, regular newsletters, Facebook and a Parent Portal to the student management system
 - a calendar on the school website highlighting important assessment related events and dates
 - an NCEA information evening at the end of Year 10
- communicating assessment policy and procedures through the staff handbook, mini Managing National Assessment audits and staff meetings
- supporting teachers new to the school to develop a clear understanding of assessment practice in relation to NCEA through the staff handbook and departmental assessment policy documentation and mentoring.

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

- providing opportunities for staff to discuss changes in assessment best practice and recommendations arising from external review
- ensuring students understand what they need to achieve in order to gain a qualification through academic conferencing with the Academic Director, Careers Counsellor, Form Teachers and Deans
- holding bi-annual three-way conferences for students and their whānau to provide updates on student progress and assist understanding of how NCEA works.

Ensure handbooks are updated annually It is recommended that the staff and student handbooks be updated annually to ensure practice is not at variance with the documentation and to ensure assessment information and terminology is current and consistent. To improve their conciseness and currency, the Principal's Nominee is planning to update the staff and student handbooks in 2020 in a more user-friendly, accessible format.

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.

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:

- updating the staff and student handbooks to ensure they are more concise, current and accessible for each target user group.