

Managing National Assessment Report

East Otago High School

April 2019

What this report is about

This report summarises NZQA's review of how effectively East Otago 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
- *NZQF Assessment Policy Staff Procedures Handbook, East Otago High School*
- *NZQF Assessment Policy Student Procedures Handbook, East Otago High School*
- *East Otago High School NAG 1 Moderation Procedure*
- *East Otago High School NAG 1 Recording Grades Procedure*
- *East Otago High School NAG 1 NCEA Entries Procedure*
- a sample of course outlines for Years 11, 12 and 13.

The School Relationship Manager met with:

- the Principal's Nominee
- Deputy Principal – Curriculum/Assessment
- Heads of Department for:
 - Mathematics
 - Physical Education
 - Social Science
 - Technology
- Teachers in Charge of:
 - Home Economics
 - Visual Arts
- three students.

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

East Otago High School

4 April 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

East Otago High School effectively demonstrates the capacity to review and evaluate its NZQA assessment practices and procedures. Review processes are led by the Principal's Nominee, Heads of Department and senior management, with input from all stakeholders, ensuring shared ownership of the process and outcomes. Self-review has led to the introduction of a range of initiatives aimed at improving both academic and vocational outcomes for all students, including, the senior mentoring programme, and expanding the range of courses available for career pathways. A part time literacy specialist has been employed to provide extra support to enable students to meet their NCEA literacy requirements.

As a result of its review of external moderation, the school has identified a growing discrepancy in the agreement rate between teachers and NZQA moderators over the past two years. The Principal's Nominee has a process for monitoring and following up any necessary actions from the external moderation process. However, this review highlights some areas where moderation could be more robust to ensure credible results are reported.

The size of the school and its dedicated staff contribute strongly to its spirit of whanaungatanga. Small class size allows for a high degree of differentiation and as a result, students' programmes are often highly individualised. All students are effectively supported through the senior mentoring initiative to meet their individual academic and vocational goals. Subject and mentor teachers use assessment data and student voice to co-construct and modify assessment programmes to best meet student needs. As a result of its internal self-review, the number of credits in senior courses has been reduced with a view to improving the number of course endorsements and to improve overall performance in the external examinations. In response to student demand, the number of external providers used by the school has increased delivering courses the school does not currently have the capacity to offer.

To better monitor and track student progress, "real-time reporting" gives both parents and students, more timely reporting on student outcomes from internal assessment. For a rural school with many parents living in remote locations, continuous, online reporting through the Parent Portal to the Student Management System has alleviated the effect of distance and improved the connection between home and school. A range of effective targeted communication is in place to ensure staff, students and parents have a common understanding of the NCEA qualification and the school's assessment policy and procedures.

Data management and use effectively supports student achievement outcomes. Assessment data is managed to ensure results reported to NZQA are timely. Achievement data is analysed to review department practice and courses, set strategic direction and evaluate the effectiveness of changes. Staff, students and parents can monitor progress to complete qualifications, and results data contributes to identifying and intervening with students at risk of not achieving a qualification.

Areas for improvement

This review identified issues with the quality of verification in two subject areas, which were found to be inconsistent with the standards moderated. The external moderation reports from the standards affected, point to the external subject verifiers agreeing with grades, with which, the NCEA moderators subsequently disagreed. In order to improve the agreement rates between teachers and NZQA moderators, the school is encouraged to routinely monitor the suitability of verifiers to ensure credible results are reported.

The Principal's Nominee and Senior Management Team can strengthen the monitoring of internal moderation by reconciling documentation with actual practice to improve confidence in the credibility of reported results.

The students interviewed stated they did not use the student handbook to inform NCEA assessment decisions. This document could be more user-friendly to reflect the literacy level of the average student and to highlight the key information for students in an improved, condensed layout.

Agreed action

The school agrees that the following action will improve the quality of its assessment systems. This is to:

- strengthen the monitoring of internal moderation by senior management in reconciling documentation with actual practice.

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School Quality Assurance and Liaison

24 May 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 23 April 2015 Managing National Assessment Report

There were no action items from the previous Managing National Assessment report.

Response to external moderation outcomes

The school identified that their 2018 report on external moderation shows a moderate level of variability in the quality of assessment at the subject level. In the two subject areas concerned, they investigated and identified a problem with the quality of verification. In future, the Principal's Nominee will monitor the appropriateness of the verifier more closely as a matter of routine, with a view to improving those subject area's agreement rates.

Internal review

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

The school has a tradition of striving for academic success and enabling its learners to realise their full potential. The new Principal and new Principal's Nominee both demonstrate a clear commitment to maintaining the history of credible practice in the school. There is an increased emphasis on identifying what is working well and what can be improved.

The school's strategic direction and annual targets clarify for all stakeholders the direction of the changes, with data being used increasingly to inform and evaluate effectiveness. Three of the annual targets relate to assessment for qualifications. Initiatives underway in support of these targets include:

- introducing a mentoring programme for senior students to track progress and support students in pursuit of their NCEA goals
- improved feedback to parents on student progress through "real-time reporting" on internal assessment through the Student Management System parent portal; the resulting grade and a comment is added for the purpose of feedback and feedforward for both the student and parents
- developing boys' agency and engagement in their teaching and learning programmes. To address the disparity between boys' and girls' achievement teachers will create units of work specifically relevant to boys, and senior boys are involved in a peer mentoring programme with junior boys
- reducing the number of credits offered in academic courses with a view to reducing student workload and to focus on the quality of the credits gained, rather than the quantity

- using a consistent Assessment Statement template generated by the student management system to clarify which standards students will be entered into and whether any further assessment opportunities will be offered for standards in the course
- introducing tracking for students in Years 9 and 10 to identify students who will require support to meet their Level 1 literacy or numeracy requirements
- employing a part-time literacy teacher to identify 'at risk' students to better ensure they meet NCEA literacy requirements and support staff with literacy strategies they can use in their teaching practice.

These initiatives undertaken by the school aim to improve achievement and engagement for all students, with a focus on boys' learning outcomes in 2019. Improved tracking and mentoring have been implemented in line with the school values of *responsibility* and *motivation*. Students report greater confidence as a result of interventions by the literacy teacher and the Principal's Nominee will collect data to measure the effectiveness and impact of this intervention.

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)

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

- having teachers use assessment data and student voice to co-construct and modify assessment programmes resulting in highly individualised programmes tailored to meet student's achievement and/or vocational goals
- extending the use of external providers to deliver courses the school does not have the capacity to offer and to expand the range of courses related to career pathways in response to student demand
- collecting school-based evidence to support applications for students identified as needing special assessment conditions and providing appropriate support
- personalising standard entries to reflect individual student's assessment programmes.

East Otago High School has effective processes and procedures for:

- monitoring the authenticity of student work
- managing missed and late assessment, appeals and breaches of the assessment rules
- ensuring resubmission practice meets NZQA requirements
- meeting the requirements of the *Privacy Act 1993*.

The student at the centre of all assessment decisions The small size of the school and the closeness, collegiality and dedication of its staff has produced a strong sense of whanaungatanga where teachers know every student in the school, their family/whanau circumstances, as well as their individual needs. Requests for entry, or withdrawal, from standards are assessed on a case-by-case basis to better meet the qualification needs of the student. The students interviewed had little or no experience of the appeal process as the quality feedback they receive during checkpoints and conferencing, reduces any ambiguity over assessment decisions made. The school continues to extend the range of courses on offer by using external providers to cater for students' assessment needs.

Māori and Pasifika engagement and success in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) subjects The Senior Management team at East Otago High School has noted the lower participation and achievement in STEM subjects for Māori and Pasifika students than for students of other ethnicities. The school is planning several initiatives to address this disparity. These include:

- building inquiry skills with a sustainability focus in the junior school linked to STEM subjects in the senior school
- modifying the timetable structure to enable Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) classes to run as separate classes to improve achievement outcomes for students studying more than one STEM subject and to maximise teacher contact time in these subjects.

Teacher collaboration supports good assessment practice The close collaboration of teachers within the school facilitates the sharing of best practice principles and procedures. The school's expectations around assessment practice are very clear and are modelled and followed consistently, in all but two of the departments interviewed. The Principal's Nominee has responded by putting support and guidance in place to monitor and manage actions arising from the review of external moderation outcomes in the departments concerned.

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)

East Otago 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
- documenting the internal moderation process on an Internal Moderation Cover Sheet
- using subject-specialists from within or outside the school to verify assessor judgements for a sample of student work
- keeping benchmark exemplars and verification notes to inform future assessment decisions.

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

- selecting random samples of student work to NZQA requirements
- monitoring external moderation feedback and agreement rates to identify trends and potential issues in a subject area
- encouraging teachers to use the External Moderation Application tool to choose standards to be included in the school's Moderation Plan.
- ensuring samples of student work are provided for external moderation by being adequately stored
- following up on external moderation feedback, including documenting actions and reporting external moderation outcomes and actions to the Principal.

Focus on reducing workload by considering verification requirements for sufficiency Due to the size of the school, most departments rely on external subject specialists from regional subject forums and teacher clusters to verify teacher grades. Strategic selection of purposefully selected samples is still not applied uniformly, with some departments choosing more samples than is necessary to meet sufficiency requirements. The school is encouraged to further clarify the selection of work for verification and what constitutes a sufficient sample.

Strategic selection has the potential to reduce verifier workload, without compromising the quality of the assurance process. There is no fixed, or predetermined, number of pieces of student work that must be verified. The sample size will be determined by factors such as assessor experience, feedback from external moderation, the availability of good quality grade boundary exemplars, and number of students assessed.

Confirm internal moderation documentation reflects actual practice The new Principal's Nominee has identified a pattern of inconsistency in two subject areas. It is good practice to physically check that all internal moderation paperwork marries up with the moderation cover sheet the teachers routinely send him and to reconcile documentation with actual practice. The Principal's Nominee should visit all

departments every year to check alignment between documentation and practice, and to ensure materials are stored and readily accessible for external moderation.

Strengthen verification to improve agreement rates between teachers and NZQA moderators

Two subject areas with relatively high levels of inconsistency were linked to flaws in the verification process. Verifiers used by these two departments had their judgements overturned in the external moderation process throwing the validity and credibility of their judgments into question. The school is encouraged to routinely monitor the suitability of verifiers to ensure credible results are reported and to avoid using the same verifiers over a long period. Where an issue arises from the external moderation process, the Head of Department completes a reflection, with an action plan for work that has not met the standard. This is followed up by the Principal's Nominee and reported to the Principal.

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:

- strengthen monitoring of the internal moderation process by reconciling documentation with actual practice.

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)

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

- identifying students requiring targeted literacy support and those capable of achieving endorsements through an analysis of “real-time reporting” documentation and year-end achievement data.

East Otago High School reports accurate achievement data by:

- reporting timely and accurate results to NZQA
- submitting fees paid and financial assistance applications on time
- ensuring that internal results are reported with a result or withdrawn as appropriate
- ensuring a low number of late entries for external examinations
- encouraging students to monitor their progress using the Student Portal and by activating their NZQA Learner login
- reporting results against the correct provider codes for outside providers with which the school holds current memoranda of understanding.

Evaluation supports achievement of school strategic goals The school has reviewed and rationalised departmental reporting to the Board of Trustees. Heads of Department analyse NCEA achievement data and now report only once annually to the Board of Trustees to evaluate any success or variance in student performance against agreed targets and to inform the Board of Trustees of any changes to standards and assessment programmes for the year ahead.

Effective monitoring supports student achievement A structured mentoring programme supports student achievement by helping learners to set academic and qualification goals. Student achievement progress is tracked during the year with interventions made at strategic points to support those at risk of not obtaining qualifications. Mentor teachers help students at risk of disengagement to maintain their focus and assist all other learners to stay motivated to achieve their qualification and vocational goals.

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))

East Otago High School has effective processes and procedures for:

- communicating assessment policy and procedures to staff and students using written, digital and face-to-face methods
- assisting parents to use the Parent Portal to monitor students' NCEA and Vocational Pathways progress through "real-time reporting"
- reviewing communications to ensure they are fit for purpose and current.

East Otago High School assists common understanding of assessment practice by:

- holding monthly Curriculum Committee meetings for Heads of Department and all interested staff to clarify changes in assessment procedures and facilitate discussion on best practice; minutes are recorded and shared with all teaching staff
- updating staff and student handbooks to reflect any changes to assessment practice and to clarify further assessment opportunities offered by external providers
- mentoring and monitoring new teachers and Heads of Departments to ensure they understand, and follow, the school's processes.

Accessible and transparent communication supports understanding Although a copy of the student handbook is available on the school website, the students interviewed had not accessed the site when resolving an assessment issue. They relied instead on information from their teachers. A possible reason for not using the handbook as their "go to" guide on assessment related matters is that the handbook is not very user friendly for the range of young people in the school. It could be more user-friendly to reflect the literacy level of the average student and to highlight the key information for students in an improved, condensed layout. This would enable greater transparency and then students could begin to take greater ownership over gathering information relating to assessment first hand.

For consideration

To encourage the student to take greater ownership and responsibility for their assessment decision making, the school is encouraged to consider:

- developing a more student friendly version of the student handbook.