

# Managing National Assessment Report

## Cromwell College

June 2021

## What this report is about

This report summarises NZQA's review of how effectively Cromwell College:

- 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 2021* (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
- *Cromwell College Senior Assessment Handbook 2021 – Guidelines for students and parents*
- *Cromwell College Procedures for NZQF Assessment 2021 – Staff handbook*
- a sample of policy guidelines
- a sample of course outlines for Levels 1, 2 and 3.

The School Relationship Manager met with:

- the Principal's Nominee
- Heads of Faculty for:
  - English
  - Mathematics
  - Physical Education
  - 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

## Cromwell College

**23 June 2021**

At the request of NZQA, and with the school's agreement, this review was rescheduled from 2020 because of the COVID-19 disruption.

### 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 issue is:

- the lack of response to recommendations made by NZQA in the 2017 Managing National Assessment review.

The school must establish a system to check that they effectively address recommendations arising from external review findings.

The recommendations from the 2017 review that must be actioned are:

- to implement systems to:
  - monitor internal moderation processes
  - ensure memoranda of understanding with outside providers are in place before assessment commences
  - update school documentation so it is current and provides full coverage of NCEA information.

The next Managing National Assessment review will be conducted within two years. NZQA will return within 12 months to check that the three outstanding recommendations to improve the management of assessment for qualifications agreed from the 2017 review have been fully implemented.

### Action required to address significant issue

In order to address these issues, the school must:

- follow-up external review recommendations and findings (*CAAS Guidelines 3v*).

### Areas for improvement

Senior leadership needs to ensure the school has consistent and coherent quality assurance processes, in order to be confident that student results reported to NZQA are the product of credible assessment. Current processes and checks do not provide the school or NZQA with this level of assurance. Once processes are established, regular checking by senior leaders will support the school's review of assessment by identifying areas of strength and those needing improvement.

Systems to ensure compliance with external moderation requirements must be implemented. External moderation provides NZQA and the school with evidence on the effectiveness of the school's quality assurance processes. External moderator feedback should be used to develop action plans where needed, and then a process

put in place by senior leaders to evaluate that the actions taken do effectively improve assessment quality. Student work needs to be stored so that it can be randomly selected and submitted for external moderation on request, so that valid evidence is able to be provided. Again, senior leaders need to be accountable for ensuring school systems mean that the school engages appropriately with external moderation.

Some other steps for the school to consider are detailed in the body of the report.

### **Agreed actions**

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

- monitor systems to ensure compliance with external moderation requirements for storing marked student work, and submitting a randomly selected sample for requested standards
- strengthen responses to external moderation by ensuring senior leaders have a process to monitor the development and completion of action plans.

## **What the school is doing well**

Cromwell College supports students to achieve their academic and career goals within an inclusive environment that caters for their individual learning needs. Staff are open to reviewing their pedagogy and courses to maximise student achievement and job prospects. Leaders are aware of where improvements in NCEA practice are required and are beginning to implement more sustainable systems for managing senior programmes and ensuring robust assessment for qualifications.

Teachers described a variety of approaches used to differentiate assessment programmes and provide diverse avenues for students to achieve at their best. The school is involved with a range of external providers that make the most of the outdoor education and other opportunities in the local area.

Heads of Faculty described a generally sound understanding of the purpose of internal moderation. They valued the activity for confirming assessor judgements and as reliable professional learning alongside an opportunity to link with colleagues at other schools.

Senior leaders and Heads of Faculty use data to track the achievement progress of students, and information is shared with whānau and teachers. Academic mentors have been appointed to support students at risk of not achieving NCEA qualifications.

Kay Wilson  
Manager  
School Quality Assurance and Liaison

20 August 2021

**NZQA**

**0800 697 296**

**[www.nzqa.govt.nz](http://www.nzqa.govt.nz)**

# 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 20 September 2017 Managing National Assessment Report

This report detailed three items to be actioned. Each requires further action by the school to resolve the items.

**1. A robust internal moderation monitoring process must be implemented**

A monitoring process is needed to ensure that the school's moderation processes produce credible results. This needs to include documentation and monitoring of processes for each standard as well as at faculty and whole-school levels. A monitoring process will reinforce the importance of internal moderation as part of assessment and the role that Heads of Faculty and senior leaders have in ensuring that it happens.

Ongoing monitoring of internal moderation systems will provide:

- teachers with clear expectations and clarification of the school's internal moderation requirements
- documentary evidence of the monitoring process including
  - confirmation from Heads of Faculty that all standards assessed in their areas have been subject to a quality assurance process, before results are reported
  - the reconciliation of samples of student work with internal moderation cover sheets for a random sample of standards for each subject
  - recorded outcomes and where issues are identified, a resolution to improve practice.

**2. Memoranda of understanding must be in place before assessment is undertaken** The school must hold a current subcontracting arrangement for all external providers and annually reconcile grades reported under their external provider codes. The school does not check that current memoranda of understanding are in place for assessment undertaken by outside providers. This creates a risk that students may not be awarded the credits for standards where they have completed an assessment.

**3. Amendments to staff and student information are needed** The school needs to have a more robust process for review of documentation and information. Changes and additions are still required to staff and student information in order for it to be comprehensive and reflect current practice and NZQA requirements. The detail of the updates and amendments required are noted in the communications section of this report.

**Response to external moderation outcomes needs strengthening** The school's response to external moderation outcomes does not meet the school's or NZQA expectations. The school's response process should include monitoring responses to external moderation outcomes, to ensure that appropriate changes are made before an assessment is used again.

Schools are required to monitor that external moderation feedback is being used to improve assessment practices and quality. Currently the Principal's Nominee and Heads of Faculty read the reports received from NZQA, but their response, including any actions taken, is not followed up.

External moderation outcomes can also provide evidence of the robustness of internal moderation processes previously undertaken. Having clear processes and expectations will help to improve staff understanding and ownership of the relationship between external and internal moderation.

### **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 internal review processes could be improved by ensuring stronger links between whole-school strategic review, faculty action plans and the analysis of student results. Senior leaders identified that challenges in workload, staff and the impact of COVID-19 have affected the school's capacity for self-review in the last two years. They consider that further opportunities for staff to engage in review at a faculty and whole-staff level would build school-wide ownership of achievement goals and the capacity to build assessment systems to better implement the school's annual plan. This would also help to address workload concerns for the Principal's Nominee.

The school has had a focus on embedding the tracking of student NCEA progress to maintain and improve current achievement rates. Self-review has resulted in school-wide initiatives, including:

- employing two mentors to provide targeted support to NCEA students at risk of not achieving, with a particular focus on literacy and numeracy
- involvement with external agencies, including the Central Otago Youth Employability Programme (COYEP) that connects students with potential employers and provides mentoring opportunities aimed at motivating young people to stay engaged in learning and the pursuit of qualifications
- ongoing professional learning sessions on meeting the varied learning and engagement needs of learners in the classroom

To further strengthen monitoring of student attainment, the school has planned the next steps for review, including:

- designing strategies to track student achievement effectively as the school roll increases and more students are involved in courses with external providers
- fully implementing a mark book-based tracking system that involves teachers projecting student credit counts in their courses three times a year.



Heads of Faculty described taking ownership of reviewing the courses and outcomes within their faculties and setting goals based on this analysis. They complete an annual review of results and report to the Board of Trustees every three years in person. Analysis includes the achievement of priority learners, including disparities for ethnicity and gender. Resulting actions taken within faculties include changing assessments and contexts within courses to improve student engagement and achievement. The next step is to align course and faculty goals with school-wide goals and professional learning. This would encourage a more consistent and effective approach to meeting school-wide targets and responding to identified issues, while building capacity in carrying out self-review across the staff.

### **Agreed action**

NZQA and senior management agree on the following action to improve the school's response to external review. Senior management undertakes to:

- strengthen responses to external moderation by ensuring senior leaders have a process to monitor the development and completion of action plans.

## 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 2021 5.1 – 5.7)*

### **Cromwell College has effective processes and procedures for meeting the assessment needs of their students by:**

- designing programmes of learning and assessment that are focussed on students' interests, needs and abilities, including the varied programme provided in the school's Outdoor Pursuits Academy
- adapting student entries in standards in response to tracking progress towards qualifications
- incorporating local contexts and employment opportunities into student programmes where possible
- extending assessment opportunities by offering online courses through the distance learning NetNZ network or Te Aho o Te Kura Pounamu.

### **Cromwell College has effective processes and procedures for:**

- using a range of strategies to ensure submitted work is authentic
- effectively managing NZQA external examinations
- motivating students by celebrating academic achievement through awards, displays and acknowledgement of success
- administering resubmissions and further assessment opportunities according to NZQA requirements
- meeting the requirements of the *Privacy Act 2020* when handling results and exemplars of student work.

**Co-ordinate student access to Special Assessment entitlements** The school should ensure that students have reliable access to their Special Assessment entitlements. A more co-ordinated approach could involve teachers requesting support with students' internal assessments in a timely manner so that students can rely on its provision. Assessment support and Special Assessment applications have been improved so that they are processed by the school's Special Education Needs Co-ordinator, and entitlements communicated to staff in staff meetings.

**Evidence gathering allows students to present best evidence** Heads of Faculty interviewed for this review described exploring a widening range of evidence gathering methods to allow students the opportunity to present their best evidence of achievement. Evidence of achievement is increasingly drawn from authenticated class work, assignments, or practical activities rather than time-bound tests. This is part of a student-centred approach to learning and assessment that involves ongoing feedback on student work and monitoring of progress, increasingly on digital platforms.

**No action required**

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

**For consideration**

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

- developing systems to support a consistent approach to students accessing Special Assessment Conditions entitlements for internal assessments.

## 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 2021 6.4b)*

### **Cromwell College has effective processes and procedures for managing internal moderation by:**

- using subject specialists from outside of the school in some subjects to verify a sample of assessor judgements
- using clarification documents, benchmark exemplars, and professional learning opportunities to clarify and support teacher grade decisions
- selecting student work at grade boundaries for verification of assessor judgements
- discussing good practice at faculty and Head of Faculty meetings, to ensure a shared understanding of processes
- using an internal moderation cover sheet in some departments to record the verification process.

**A robust internal moderation monitoring process is needed** The school needs to implement a monitoring process to ensure that their moderation actions produce credible results. This process needs to include checking documentation and that processes are completed for each standard, as well as at faculty and whole-school levels. Monitoring will reinforce the importance of internal moderation in ensuring credible assessment and the role that Heads of Faculty and senior leaders have in making it happen

Ongoing monitoring of internal moderation systems will provide teachers with clear expectations and clarification of the school's internal moderation requirements. Documentary evidence of the monitoring process should include:

- confirmation from Heads of Faculty that all standards assessed in their areas have been subject to a quality assurance process, before results are reported
- the reconciliation of student work samples with internal moderation cover sheets for a sample of standards in each subject
- recording outcomes of grade verification, and where issues are identified, a resolution to improve practice.

**Noncompliance with external moderation requirements** The school must comply with external moderation requirements for submitting requested standards, storage of work, and random selection of student samples. This includes senior leaders checking that requirements are being met.

The school has not submitted sufficient material for external moderation in 2021. Inadequate storage and a lack of monitoring of moderation submissions have resulted in them not providing evidence for 13 of the 34 standards requested this year. Previously, the school had systems in place to ensure that NZQA expectations were met, and so they were fully compliant in 2019.

Faculties have a variety of systems to store student work, some more efficient than others. Clearer protocols for both digital and physical storage would assist teachers to have student work available for external moderation when there are staffing changes or student work is assessed in a variety of formats. Teachers could be further encouraged to request standards for inclusion in the school's external moderation plan. This would mean that feedback is timely and appropriate to current assessment programmes and faculty priorities.

Student work for external moderation must be randomly selected. Some faculties currently submit work selected at grade boundaries, which is a recommended approach for internal moderation. A consistent process for random selection could include using the random generator on the student management system. This approach will enable the school to confidently use external moderation results to measure the effectiveness of their quality assurance practices.

### **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:

- monitor systems to ensure compliance with external moderation requirements for storing marked student work, and submitting a randomly selected sample for requested standards

## 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)*

### **Cromwell College effectively uses assessment-related data to support achievement outcomes for students by:**

- using student results throughout the year to inform learning and assessment, and the review of courses in faculties, and in annual faculty reports to the Board of Trustees
- using the school's Learning Management System to track the progress of students in individual courses
- holding learning meetings within faculties to discuss student progress and put plans in place to raise student achievement, including creating Individual Learning Programmes for students who need additional support
- tracking the progress of high-achieving students towards gaining a Merit or Excellence course endorsement, and Certificate endorsement, and encouraging students to aim to achieve the required grades.

### **Cromwell College reports accurate achievement data by:**

- submitting results to NZQA on a timely and regular basis
- reporting only entries for internal standards for which a result has been recorded
- checking for, and correcting where necessary, data submission errors shown on the *Key Indicators* and data file submission reports from NZQA
- confirming the accuracy of internal and external entries prior to key dates to reduce late entries
- only reporting results for standards for which the school has consent to assess, or against the provider codes of outside providers with whom the school holds memoranda of understanding

### **Effective monitoring and academic mentoring support achievement outcomes**

The school has developed effective processes to monitor student engagement in learning and assessment, and progress towards completing literacy and numeracy requirements and qualifications. Achievement and pastoral data are used to inform a senior mentoring initiative. This is coordinated by an Assistant Principal who employs staff to provide targeted support for students struggling with their organisation and motivation. The achievement of identified 'red dot' students is closely tracked by deans who coordinate any adaptations to their programmes and evaluate their effectiveness.

**Foster student use of the NZQA Learner Login** The school should encourage and support students to create and use their NZQA learner login. Students use their logins to check their NCEA results, request reconsiderations and order certificates. Registration is also essential for being able to access external digital assessments.

**For consideration**

To extend good practice in managing and making use of assessment-related data, the school is encouraged to consider:

- encouraging and supporting students to create and use their NZQA learner login.

## 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))*

### **Cromwell College has effective processes and procedures for:**

- ensuring course outlines are available, either digitally or on paper, for all students
- encouraging students to monitor their achievement through the school's Learning Management System portal
- informing staff of updates to NCEA information throughout the year
- reporting on students' progress towards qualifications.

### **Cromwell College assists common understanding of assessment practice by:**

- informing students of NCEA opportunities and requirements through assemblies, in form classes, and advice from teachers.

**Documentation update required** Providing current and comprehensive information about school and NZQA processes to staff and students will ensure they have access to the same information and support consistent practice. When the staff and student handbooks are next updated, the school's processes and procedures for the following assessment processes should be amended:

- gathering authentic evidence for achievement from a range of assessment opportunities, and assessing students when ready
- resubmission and further assessment opportunities
- documenting and monitoring internal moderation
- external moderation procedures, follow up and monitoring, including the use of the moderation application and random selection of student work
- accessing NZQA login for students and teachers
- requirements for course endorsement.

**Review the most effective communication modes for students** The school has identified that they need to review which modes of communication are most suitable for students to ensure that information is clearly understood by them. To support students to achieve, teachers should be explicit about what evidence is required at each grade level for assessments.

Students interviewed were unclear about some basic information about NCEA and school-wide assessment procedures. This may not be a problem as the students were confident that they knew where to access the information they needed. However, as there are gaps in the current handbooks, this information may not be up to date or accurate. Students also said they would appreciate further explanation of how to achieve merit and excellent grades in assessments.



**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:

- reviewing the most effective communication modes for students.