

Managing National Assessment Report

Tokomairiro High School

September 2021

What this report is about

This report summarises NZQA's review of how effectively Tokomairiro 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 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 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
- *2021 Senior Qualifications Booklet, Tokomairiro High School* (Student Handbook)
- *2021 Assessment Procedures 2021, Tokomairiro High School* (Staff Handbook)
- a sample of course outlines for NCEA classes.

The School Relationship Manager met with:

- the Principal's Nominee
- Deputy Principal – Curriculum/Assessment
- Head of Department for Science
- Co-HOD for English
- Acting HOD for Physical Education
- Teachers of
 - Geography and Horticulture
 - Mathematics
- three students.

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

Background

The Board of Trustees for Tokomairiro High School has governance responsibility for Toko Training. This provides training and assessment for relevant qualifications, such as forestry skills, for youth and adult trainees enrolled in its programmes. Some standards are assessed using Tokomairiro High School's consent to assess and the High School manages the assessment and quality assurance of these results. For other standards, Toko Training uses its own consent.

SUMMARY

Tokomairiro High School

22 September 2021

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 2020 due to COVID-19 disruptions.

What the school is doing well

Tokomairiro High School provides courses and assessment opportunities that cater for the pathway and achievement priorities of its community. Staff are proactive in designing programmes that address a range of student interests and abilities so that each student's learning is appropriate to their needs. This is evident in the development of the school's new curriculum structure and the ongoing review of courses and assessments by teachers.

All teachers take responsibility for evaluating students' progress towards qualifications throughout the year and have strategies in place to raise achievement for individuals and groups of students. Small class sizes assist teachers to develop individual programmes for students that draw on their interests and include local contexts, the use of external providers, and a range of different disciplines within single courses.

The school's assessment policies and procedures are communicated to staff and students effectively, increasingly through digital means. The small staff and student body mean that communication about assessment processes is often done informally, and students are confident in approaching teachers for course guidance and assessment information.

Areas for improvement

The school has agreed that it will continue to implement systems that ensure that all moderation requirements are met and monitored. A range of external moderation materials were unavailable for submission in April 2021, and systems were not yet in place to ensure that storage, submission, and monitoring of the process was effective. Since then, the Principal's Nominee has created spreadsheets to assist with the submission of external moderation as required by NZQA, and for ensuring there are effective responses to any issues identified.

The school has agreed that the application of Special Assessment Conditions will be improved to ensure that students are further supported to complete their

assessments. This may help improve student engagement in external assessments which is an issue that has been identified by the school.

The school needs to provide NZQA with results from assessments that may be used as Derived Grades or Unexpected Event Grades if required. Clearer processes for the collection of relevant evidence and the submission of these grades will ensure that grades are available to NZQA if needed.

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

Agreed action

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

- ensure that external moderation submission requirements are met and monitored
- strengthen the external moderation process by ensuring senior leaders have a process to monitor the successful completion of action plans
- ensure that eligible students have access to Special Assessment Conditions
- provide NZQA with grades that can be used for Unexpected Event Grades if required.

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19 November 2021

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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 4 July 2017 Managing National Assessment Report After the review in 2017, the school agreed to address four items. The school has made progress towards addressing these issues by:

- monitoring internal moderation to ensure the process is robust. The Principal's Nominee has introduced systems to assist with tracking all results have been subject to verification before they are submitted to NZQA.
- encouraging teachers to check the accuracy of entry and results data on the school's NZQA Provider login page.
- reviewing school documentation to ensure it is up-to-date and accurately reflects the practice in the school. Current staff and student NCEA assessment handbooks are consistent and reflect good practice.
- teachers addressing issues raised in external moderation and the Principal's Nominee creating systems to monitor that intended actions are completed.

Response to external moderation outcomes The school needs to monitor that when moderation reports are received, they are used to create action plans to address any inconsistent outcomes identified by the moderator. This will enable changes to be made in a timely manner and be monitored by the Principal's Nominee and senior leaders. Currently, external moderation is welcomed by teachers as additional feedback to their assessment judgements. Moderation reports are downloaded by the Principal's Nominee and made available in a spreadsheet. Teachers discuss their reports in departments and use them to make changes to assessments before they are used again. The school needs to strengthen its response to external moderation by checking the satisfactory completion of any actions taken to address the issues identified in the reports.

Feedback from external moderation should be used to provide confirmation of the effectiveness of internal moderation. The school is encouraged to consider strengthening its review process by reflecting on internal moderation, particularly in areas where issues have been identified, such as assessors being unfamiliar with the quality of evidence required to determine grades. This reflection could include a review of the verifier used, ensuring they are a subject expert with recent standard-specific experience. It could also include whether teachers require further support in meeting moderation expectations. Extending how teachers respond to external moderation feedback will support robust internal moderation practice and improve assessors' understanding of standard requirements.

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)

School leaders, teachers and Heads of Department have reviewed the school's curriculum structure to improve student engagement and achievement and give access to pathways that better meet student needs and interests. The school has introduced modular semester courses, each offering up to 12 credits. Semester one modules focus on internally assessed standards, while second semester modules include a mixture of externally and internally assessed standards tailored to the needs of the cohort. Teachers are continuing to evaluate new and existing junior and senior courses through results analysis and adapting programmes to suit student needs. The staff curriculum review committee reports regularly to whole staff meetings, in which teachers have a voice and can contribute to the next steps of the review. The new timetable structure is driven by student choice, with few prerequisites at any level, ensuring student pathways remain as open as possible.

Heads of Department and Teachers in Charge review senior modules at the end of each semester. Module review includes analysing achievement in selected standards, identifying trends, and designing strategies to address equity issues for Māori students and boys. Teachers are asked to plan and monitor changes that will lift the achievement and engagement of students in their subject areas. Ongoing review contributes to in-depth annual departmental reports to the Principal and the Board of Trustees that in turn support leaders and teachers to set specific achievement targets.

The Principal's Nominee has recently introduced new systems to improve the monitoring of internal and external moderation processes, as a result of a low external moderation submission rate in 2021. School leaders should consider how the effectiveness of these processes will be reviewed. The Deputy Principal conducts annual department reviews that focus on curriculum and resourcing. The leadership team is considering whether to extend the scope of the review to include assessment and moderation practices.

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 the external moderation process by ensuring senior leaders have a process to monitor the successful completion of action plans

For consideration

To extend good practice in self-review of assessment, the school is encouraged to consider:

- reviewing how moderation practices are monitored schoolwide.

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)

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

- offering assessment opportunities that reflect student aspirations and interests, through a semesterised contextual curriculum that prioritises student choice
- using a range of Achievement and Unit Standards across the curriculum which supports student achievement, skill building, and career interests
- trialling the use of digital examinations, to be consistent with digital teaching and learning activities
- gathering evidence for internal assessment through a range of methods, to suit student strengths and preferences
- partnering with Toko Training to offer courses outside the school timetable, including a forestry pathways course for senior students still enrolled in school and a Youth Guarantee Course for school leavers.

Tokomairiro High School has effective processes and procedures for:

- managing missed and late assessments while ensuring that students are assessed when ready
- using a range of strategies to ensure that student work is authentic
- appropriate use of resubmission and further assessment opportunities
- meeting the requirements of the *Privacy Act 2020* in the issuing of student results and using student work as exemplars.

Ensure access to Special Assessment Conditions The school should ensure that students have access to Special Assessment Conditions to remove barriers to achievement in internal and external assessments. Currently, few applications are made, and only for students who intend to enter external examination standards. A more systematic approach to gathering school-based evidence and the provision of entitlements is needed to ensure that students achieve to their potential in both internal and external assessment. This could improve the engagement of students in assessment opportunities, as well as ensuring that teachers and students are better equipped to understand students' learning and assessment needs throughout the year.

Encouraging equity in high achievement The school has had a recent focus on improving overall achievement for Māori students and boys. The school could consider reviewing the extent to which current processes for course selection and academic mentoring support high expectations for these students. School leaders and teachers are aware of engagement and achievement gaps for groups of students in different senior modules, particularly in STEM subjects and in achievement standards in other University Entrance approved subjects. There has been decreasing engagement in external examinations in the last few years for these groups of students.

The students spoken to for this review mentioned that they would appreciate ongoing guidance to help them determine their future academic pathways, including teachers setting higher expectations to help them achieve Merit and Excellence grades.

Agreed action

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

- ensure that eligible students have access to Special Assessment Conditions.

For consideration

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

- reviewing the extent to which current processes for course selection and academic mentoring support high expectations of all students.

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)

Tokomairiro High School has effective processes and procedures for managing internal moderation by:

- using subject specialists from within and outside the school to verify a sample of student work
- strategically selecting work for verification, to support teachers to improve their understanding of grade boundaries and ensure that all grades reported to NZQA are consistent with the national standard
- some teachers using NZQA's online moderation support materials to support their assessor judgements
- recording the internal moderation process and verification decisions on an internal moderation cover sheet that is stored within department files.

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

- implementing a new system to ensure that the storage of samples of student work is monitored by the Principal's Nominee and Deputy Principal
- teachers using feedback from external moderation to improve assessments before they are used again.

Improving systems to monitor the completion of internal moderation The Principal's Nominee has introduced a system to assist with closer monitoring of internal moderation, including recording the use of verifiers outside the school, as a result of a recommendation from NZQA. These systems should prove effective in ensuring there is evidence of all internal moderation requirements being met by the school and results submitted to NZQA are credible. When paired with the school's developing digital storage systems, the new internal moderation monitoring spreadsheet will give school leaders more confidence in the school's quality assurance processes.

The school must meet NZQA's requirements for the submission of external moderation The school must continue to implement and embed processes that ensure that all external moderation requirements are met and monitored. Some systems have recently been introduced to ensure that storage, submission, and monitoring of external moderation will meet NZQA's requirements. The Principal's Nominee has created spreadsheets that will assist with the submission of external moderation materials, and that there are effective responses to any issues identified. The Principal's Nominee intends to ensure that teachers request standards for inclusion in the school's Assessment Plan for 2022 so that teachers receive relevant and timely feedback on their assessor judgements and improve their understanding of the role of external moderation.

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:

- ensure that external moderation submission requirements are met and monitored.

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)

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

- tracking student achievement progress at individual, classroom and cohort levels, and teachers collaborating to address concerns
- monitoring the progress of students identified with the potential to gain course and NCEA certificate endorsements, to ensure that opportunities are available for students to achieve Merit and Excellence results
- adapting the school's mentoring programme as a result of COVID-19 disruptions, to focus on effective support and tracking of senior students in horizontal year groups
- evaluating the effectiveness of assessment programmes on an ongoing and annual basis, to inform curriculum changes and better reflect student abilities, interests and changing contexts for learning.

Tokomairiro High School reports accurate achievement data by:

- reporting results against the correct code for outside providers with whom the school holds current Memoranda of Understanding
- completing regular submissions of standard entries and results to NZQA and using error reports to correct any inaccuracies identified.

The school must submit practice external grades to NZQA The school should provide NZQA with grades which can be used for Unexpected Event Grades, if students are unable to sit end of year exams for a reason beyond their control. Currently, students complete practice assessments in class and these grades are retained within departments. Collection and tracking of grades from school-based evidence could contribute to more accurate planning for external assessments and assist with building student confidence in attempting external examinations.

Encouraging students to access their NZQA login The school could further encourage and support students to create and use their NZQA Learner login. Students use their logins to check their NCEA results, request reconsiderations of external assessments and order certificates. Registration is also essential for being able to access external digital assessments. The school is planning to use the report available under Key Indicators in 2021 to assist with monitoring student access to Learner logins.

Agreed action

NZQA and senior management agree on the following action to improve the management and use of assessment-related data. Senior management undertakes to:

- provide NZQA with grades that can be used for Unexpected Event Grades if required.

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

Tokomairiro High School has effective processes and procedures for:

- providing clear guidance to students and their whānau about relevant programme pathways including specific information about courses and standards
- providing access to assessment results through the school's Student Management System portal to students and their whānau
- communicating assessment policy and procedure through students' form classes and classroom teachers.

Tokomairiro High School assists common understanding of assessment practice by:

- ensuring that new staff have ongoing opportunities to ask questions about the school's policies and procedures
- reviewing staff and student assessment handbooks to ensure that they are up to date and fit for purpose.

Reviewing how assessment information is communicated The school should consider reviewing the current means of communicating assessment information to students and staff to ensure they meet the needs of the intended audiences and to provide a more consistent understanding of NCEA requirements and the school's procedures. Students interviewed for this review had read the school's NCEA student handbook. However, they described learning about NCEA through teachers' explanations as being more effective, and would have appreciated other means of communication, including posters and digital information, for them to understand systems, help them get organised and achieve higher grades. Similarly, teachers reported that they have a good understanding of most school assessment procedures but would appreciate further clarification and explanation of some aspects.

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:

- reviewing the current means of communicating assessment information to students and staff to ensure that they meet the needs of the intended audiences.