

# **Managing National Assessment Report**

## **Waiau Area School**

**October 2019**

## What this report is about

This report summarises NZQA's review of how effectively Waiau Area 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
- *Waiau Area School, NCEA Staff Handbook, 2019*
- *NCEA at Waiau Area School, Student/Parent Handbook, 2019*
- *Waiau Area School, Internal Assessment Guide*
- *Waiau Area School – NCEA Policy*
- a sample of course outlines for Years 11, 12 and 13.

The School Relationship Manager met with:

- the Principal's Nominee
- Heads of Learning Area for:
  - Mathematics
  - Physical Education
  - Science
- Teachers of:
  - Senior English
  - Level 1 English
- 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

## Waiau Area School

16 October 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

Waiau Area School ensures students can maximise their achievement by adapting the courses it offers, and the way they are delivered, in order to meet cohort and individual student need. The school extends the opportunities available to students by using external providers to offer courses and standards it does not have the capacity to deliver. Although the school has currently not applied for special assessment conditions for students, it is gathering school-based evidence to support possible future applications. Assessment practices are effective, understood by students and staff, and consistently applied. These practices contribute towards assisting students to improve their assessment outcomes.

The school responds appropriately to issues identified by both internal and external review. Self-review is driven by the management team along with the Principal's Nominee, often taking into account wider teacher, student and parent voice. This leads to changes in assessment-related practice to better meet the needs of students. A major focus of review has been on ensuring courses have at least some degree of face-to-face delivery and that students are suitably challenged to achieve.

Internal moderation processes, responses to external moderation, and monitoring by the Principal's Nominee, ensure that only credible assessment results are reported to NZQA. This effective practice means issues are identified promptly and followed up until they are resolved.

Data management and use effectively supports student achievement outcomes and ensures the timely reporting of results to NZQA. Individual students' achievement data is analysed to review teaching practice and courses, and evaluate the effectiveness of changes. Students monitor their own progress towards completing qualifications through their online tracker and their NZQA Learner Login. Staff regularly discuss student progress and use data to identify and then intervene with students at risk of not achieving to their potential.

The school communications allow staff, students and their families to gain a common understanding of NCEA and school assessment expectations.

### Areas for improvement

Some changes and additions are required to the staff handbook, so it reflects current school practice.

## **Agreed action**

The school agreed that the following action will improve the quality of their assessment systems:

- update the staff handbook so it provides current information that aligns with school practice.

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27 November 2019

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# FINDINGS OF THIS REVIEW

## How effectively has the school responded to external and internal review?

### External review

*Evidence for external review actions having been appropriately and effectively addressed. (CAAS Guidelines 2.6iv, 3iv-3v)*

**Action Items from 22 June 2016 Managing National Assessment report** The review identified two agreed actions, and these have been resolved.

**Response to external moderation outcomes** The school has effective processes for responding to external moderation. Feedback from external moderation of the limited number of subject areas that the school had recently assessed show that overall there is a high level of consistency between assessor and moderator judgements. Reports for one subject area show a pattern of ongoing issues, but there has been no continuity of staffing to effectively resolve the issues. The Principal's Nominee is working with the current teacher to ensure that robust processes are in place to support them to make and verify assessment judgements.

The Principal's Nominee reads each report and forwards a copy to the teacher. If a report highlights an issue the teacher submits a written response outlining how the issue will be resolved. He discusses the planned actions with the teacher and checks that they are completed.

The school has the same process for responding to external moderation conducted by Industry Training Organisations.

### 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 effectively reviews its assessment-related processes in response to identified issues and to explore potential improvements. This is driven by the senior management team, taking into account student, parent and teacher voice. The Principal's Nominee has developed his own practice to lead review of NCEA processes. In consultation with staff, and aligned with the senior management's focus, he sets goals annually to improve assessment practice and reviews the progress made.

A key outcome of review has been to focus on delivering subjects to students face to face and increasing the number of courses delivered by specialists within the school. Where curriculum-based subjects have to be delivered by an outside provider the school has moved, where possible, to using a virtual learning network in preference to Te Aho o Te Kura Pounamu (The Correspondence School). Self-review determined that the regular online contact with a teacher that the virtual learning network provides better suits the needs of the school's students. This has resulted in more students completing their chosen course. Any students who still find that distance learning does not suit their learning style, move to alternative courses that still support their chosen pathways.

Another area of focus has been to challenge students to build their resilience so they can make difficult decisions and push themselves to succeed. This has looked at balancing students deciding when they are ready to be assessed with working to a more structured timeline. This is to make certain the pace of learning ensures students have the opportunity to achieve enough credits to reach their qualification goals and to help maintain their engagement. Tied to this focus is creating a Physical Education course which is Achievement Standards-based, and working with students to undertake more externally assessed standards to help them achieve their assessment goals and support their progression with a subject.

Due to the small and varied cohorts, both annual department review and the school as a whole look at each group's needs and tailor accordingly what courses will be offered each year. From data gathered in the middle school it was apparent that a significant number of the students in the current Year 11 cohort would need support to achieve the literacy requirements to gain a qualification. This resulted in running two English courses this year; one designed to support students to reach their literacy goals and one designed to give students access to a full English Achievement Standard course in Year 12. For next year, the school is looking at providing a combined Geography, Social Studies, History and Technology course to meet the needs of a particular cohort whilst still providing face-to-face teaching.

Other planned areas of future review and development include:

- deciding how to utilise the improved access for students to laptop computers and increased IT technician support that has been established, to best engage with digital external assessment
- extending the termly goal setting and review process currently being piloted with Y11 students.

### **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)*

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

- differentiating assessment through offering varied contexts and, where appropriate, tailoring assessment opportunities to individuals within a course
- using formative assessment activities, milestone checks and feedback to prepare students for assessment opportunities
- providing individualised support for students to reach the literacy and numeracy requirements to gain qualifications.

### **Waiau Area School has effective processes and procedures for:**

- monitoring the authenticity of student work during the assessment and marking process
- managing missed and late assessment, appeals and breaches of the assessment rules
- providing valid resubmission and further assessment opportunities
- ensuring student evidence for derived grades is standard specific and verified
- meeting the requirements of the *Privacy Act 1993*.

**Focus on providing assessment to meet student needs** To ensure the school provides suitable pathways, students are offered a wide choice of courses. The school endeavours to find ways of accommodating students' choices through school-based classes, which could be multi-level and/or mixed subjects, or through a range of external providers, including a virtual learning network, the Southern Institute of Technology, Star and Gateway courses and Te Aho o Te Kura Pounamu. For courses delivered through distance learning the eDean closely monitors each individual's progress.

**Developing the use of special assessment conditions** Over the last three years the school has not submitted any applications for students to use special assessment conditions. It is however, gathering evidence in Years 8 to 10 to support future applications. This year a student with existing special assessment conditions transferred from another school and staff are well informed of her entitlements and appropriate assistance is readily available.

**Structure of courses is responsive to student need** Due to the size of the school there is some flexibility in constructing courses to meet student need. The school timetable is designed to minimise missed class time for students who attend courses based outside the school. Individual teachers can negotiate with each other if, at a certain point, students need extra class time to meet a particular assessment goal. The school is also considering covering a course over half a year in 2020 around a planned teacher sabbatical to ensure students can complete the course with school-based teaching.

**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)*

### **Waiau Area School has effective processes and procedures for managing internal moderation by:**

- setting a clear expectation that staff refer to documentation such as past moderation reports, National Moderator's reports and clarifications before assessing a standard
- ensuring staff understand the need for all new or modified assessment materials to be critiqued prior to use
- using subject specialists, from mainly outside the school, to verify that assessor judgements are consistent with the standard
- retaining and updating work to be used as exemplars for students and benchmarking for future assessor judgements
- documenting the quality assurance process on an *Internal Moderation Cover Sheet*
- following appropriate processes for moderating Industry Training Organisation administered standards.

### **Waiau Area School has effective processes and procedures for managing external moderation by:**

- negotiating appropriate changes to the moderation plan to gain feedback on standards currently being assessed
- selecting samples of student work to NZQA requirements
- ensuring samples of student work are provided by being adequately stored.

**Effective monitoring of internal moderation** Processes assure senior management that all reported results are credible. Internal moderation cover sheets are submitted to the Principal's Nominee to show an assessment task has been critiqued before it is used. When grade verification is completed, a final copy of the cover sheet is handed in with a list of results and the student work. At both stages the Principal's Nominee reviews the information and discusses any issues with the teacher so they can be resolved before results are reported to NZQA.

**Developing moderation systems as staff gain assessor experience** For most standards grades awarded on all student work are verified, due to small classes and a large proportion of teachers being new to NCEA assessment. As staff gain experience with making assessor judgements the school should consider encouraging them to focus verification on work at grade boundaries. This has the potential to reduce verifier workload, without compromising the quality assurance of grade decisions.

To help teachers develop their assessor judgements the school should consider encouraging staff to suggest standards for external moderation. This would give them the opportunity to receive feedback on standards their self-review has identified as needing targeted support.

**For consideration**

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

- encouraging staff to suggest standards for external moderation.

## 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)*

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

- showing them how to register and use their NZQA Learner Login, in order to monitor their progress towards gaining qualifications
- analysing results, with a focus on individuals' progression and next steps, which informs the modification of courses and teaching practice.

### **Waiau Area School reports accurate achievement data by:**

- having teacher and Principal's Nominee checks and sign offs of entries and results at key points in the year
- closely managing withdrawals from standards, and late entries
- only reporting results for standards for which the school holds consent, or against the correct code of outside providers with whom the school holds a centrally stored, current memorandum of understanding
- submitting data files to NZQA on a timely and regular basis
- reporting Not Achieved results as appropriate.

**Student progress is effectively tracked and interventions put in place to improve achievement outcomes** The school uses data effectively to track student progress, with a focus on improving student achievement outcomes. Any concerns are brought up in weekly senior syndicate meetings to discuss if any support mechanisms need to be put in place. These are followed up with students during *Monday Morning Management Hour* by the Senior Home Room Teacher and individual subject teachers.

As well as using their NZQA Learner Login students and parents also have access to an online tracker. This is a spreadsheet which is regularly updated to show students their entries and results. It can be used to track their progress towards qualifications. and also includes links to related school and NZQA information.

### **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 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))*

### **Waiiau Area School has effective processes and procedures for:**

- ensuring students receive outlines for all courses they undertake
- communicating assessment policy and procedures to teachers, students and their families using a range of methods
- inducting new staff to familiarise them with the school's expectations for assessment and moderation processes, and providing continued support.

### **Waiiau Area School assists common understanding of assessment practice by:**

- regular discussions at senior syndicate meetings
- displaying NZQA's *Mythbusters* on the wall in the staffroom so they can be easily referred to as needed
- the Principal's Nominee regularly talking to students about how NCEA works and school assessment procedures from the end of Year 10 onwards, with consistent reinforcement from class teachers
- discussing NZQA and school assessment expectations with students and parents during three-way conferences.

### **Students show good understanding NCEA and school assessment procedures**

The students interviewed could clearly articulate how NCEA works. They understood school processes such as extensions, resubmissions, moderation, dealing with authenticity, derived grades and appeals, and felt their teachers applied them consistently.

**Changes to staff and student handbooks** The staff handbook has some material that needs to be added or updated to align with current school practice. This includes adding information on:

- how extensions of student submission deadlines are managed in line with the missed and late assessment procedures
- the expected follow up process for external moderation reports
- the use of school-based evidence to support special assessment condition applications
- privacy considerations and seeking permission when using student work for exemplars.

The staff and student handbooks have been reviewed, repetition has been removed and they are presented in an easy to read format. The staff handbook is a combination of expected procedures and good practice centred in the school's particular context. A separate two-page *Internal Assessment Guide* has been developed. This is written in appropriate student language to provide an easy to use reference document for students. Given that more students are participating in external assessment, the school could consider expanding its coverage and adding some similar basic points around external assessment. For example, what can be used to provide evidence for derived grades.

**Agreed action**

NZQA and senior management agree on the following action to maintain the currency of assessment policy and procedures, and communicate them to staff, students and families. Senior management undertakes to:

- update the staff handbook so it provides current information that aligns with school practice.