

Managing National Assessment Report

Whangamata Area School

March 2017

What this report is about

This report summarises NZQA's review of how effectively Whangamata 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 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 2017* (Assessment Rules).

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:

- *Staff Guidelines 2017 Whangamata Area School 0428*
- *Whangamata Area School NCEA Student Information 2017*
- one example of a course outline.

Two School Relationship Managers met with the Principal's Nominee, the Assistant Principal's Nominee, three students and Heads of Department for Mathematics, Physical Education and Health, Social Sciences, and Technology.

There was a report-back session with the Principal, Principal's Nominee, and Assistant 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

Whangamata Area School

23 March 2017

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 issues. Therefore, it is anticipated that the next Managing National Assessment review will be conducted within three years.

What the school is doing well

Whangamata Area School has developed adequate and appropriate systems of assessment and moderation to ensure credible results are reported.

Items identified in the previous Managing National Assessment review were actioned in a timely manner and have led to improvements in processes for moderation. Teachers demonstrate effective practice with purposeful selection of material, and hold discussions around borderline pieces of student work. The Principal's Nominee monitors the completion of this process.

Assessment programmes are designed to meet a range of student abilities, aspirations, and interests. This includes engaging with outside providers, adapting contexts to focus on local issues, and encouraging students to present evidence for assessment in a variety of ways.

Accurate data is sent to NZQA regularly. This is evidenced through a low number of late entries and errors. Results analysis undertaken by teachers is used to report to senior management, as a basis for reflection on the previous year's programme and to adapt future teaching and assessment.

Communication is fit for purpose. Course outlines display consistent information across all subjects. The student handbook is written in appropriate language and parents and community receive information through a variety of modes including Facebook, handbooks, and email. Regular staff meetings ensure all teachers of NCEA are kept up to date with requirements and expectations.

Areas for improvement

Monitoring systems for teachers responding to external moderation and completing internal moderation are in place. The next step is to ensure that the processes undertaken are not only compliant, but robust. Of particular focus should be reviewing verifiers used for internal moderation and ensuring there is evidence of discussion having taken place. Feedback from the 2017 external moderation submission should form a basis for the school's self-review on the effectiveness of this.

Memoranda of understanding are in place where outside providers are used, however, there is no current centralised system to reconcile these with reported results.

The school is encouraged to investigate students who may be eligible for special assessment conditions so that barriers to achievement can be removed and they then have a fair opportunity to achieve credits.

Despite evidence of a wide range of approaches to communicating and receiving assessment information, the current handbook for students is in hardcopy issued to all at an assembly. It may be timely to review if this could be enhanced by additional formats such as digital which could improve the accessibility to the information.

Agreed action

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

- review the effectiveness of responses made to external moderation
- monitor students with Special Assessment Conditions entitlement. (*Assessment Rules for schools with Consent to Assess 2017, 5.5*)
- review the appropriateness of verifiers used for internal moderation
- monitor the effectiveness of internal moderation undertaken
- reconcile memoranda of understanding and subcontracting agreements with reported results.

Areas for consideration

To support assessment practice and student achievement the school is encouraged to consider:

- the mode by which the student handbook is communicated.

Kay Wilson
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19 May 2017

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FINDINGS OF THIS REVIEW

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

External review

Evidence found that external review actions have been appropriately and effectively addressed. (CAAS Guidelines 2.6iv, 3v)

Action Items from the 12 March 2015 Managing National Assessment Report

The review identified two required actions relating to the monitoring of internal moderation. All teachers must submit a completed *Internal Moderation Cover Sheet* to the Principal's Nominee before results are reported to NZQA. This meets the requirements of the identified action. Suggestions on improving the effectiveness of this process are discussed further in the Moderation section of this report.

Five other agreed items were identified in the areas of moderation and communication. All were actioned in a timely manner.

Review the effectiveness of responses to external moderation feedback A process is in place to respond to feedback from external moderation. Relevant teachers are required to complete a *Response to External Moderation* form and forward this to the Principal's Nominee. This form enables staff to make comment on the feedback and to document actions to address issues. Although some of the comments and action items sighted focused on specific aspects of the standard, others only commented on general process.

To improve the robustness of this process, the school should also use external moderation feedback to help evaluate the effectiveness of internal moderation and the extent to which it could be a contributing factor to low agreement rates. Aspects such as reviewing the appropriateness of the verifier should form part of this process. This is discussed further in the moderation section of this report.

The school's most recent external moderation submission was December 2016. The overall agreement rate has dropped from previous years. The moderator could not agree with the majority of teacher judgements for 11 of the 23 requested standards. Furthermore, moderators could not yet express confidence in the assessor's ability in five subject areas to make assessment judgements at the national standard.

It will be important following the December 2017 external moderation round that the 2016 responses and action items identified are reviewed to confirm they were completed in a timely manner and achieved what they set out to achieve.

Internal review

Evidence found that the school is effectively 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 uses self-review to reflect on its NCEA assessment procedures and respond appropriately when issues are identified. Following aspects discussed in the previous Managing National Assessment report, the school reviewed some assessment practices and implemented changes such as:

- strengthening the internal moderation process to encourage teachers to purposefully select material for verification
- implementing a random selection process for external moderation that meets NZQA requirements
- updating documentation
- developing an authenticity declaration to be completed by all students
- ensuring students receive consistent information about each of their courses through the introduction of a common course template.

All teachers of NCEA meet regularly as part of the school's meeting cycle. This forum provides the formal means to flag deadlines, reinforce changes in procedures and discuss assessment issues. This helps to ensure a consistency of practice school-wide. The next step for the school is to further develop its own capacity to identify and respond to issues or risks through robust self-review processes that improve the effectiveness of its assessment practice.

Agreed action

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

- review the effectiveness of responses made to external moderation.

How effectively does the school's assessment practice meet the needs of its students?

Evidence found that assessment practice is meeting student needs. (CAAS Guidelines 2.5v-vii, 2.6 I & ii and Assessment (including Examination) Rules for Schools with Consent to Assess 2017 5.5)

Whangamata Area School has effective processes and procedures for meeting the needs of their students by:

- adapting assessment to make use of local contexts and to meet interests of students
- assessing students when ready through flexible timeframes
- allowing the option of presenting evidence for assessment using a range of methods
- providing differentiated assessment within courses with the use of optional standards
- offering a range of Vocational Pathways through Gateway and making use of outside providers
- ensuring programmes are developed to assist progress towards meeting literacy and numeracy requirements.

Whangamata Area School has effective processes and procedures for:

- encouraging and maintaining authentic assessment practice
- reporting Not Achieved where a student has presented evidence that is not at the standard, or has had an adequate assessment opportunity and submitted no work
- investigating student appeals
- resubmission and further assessment opportunities
- managing missed and late assessment
- meeting the requirements of the Privacy Act 1993.

Monitor students who may be eligible for special assessment conditions In 2016, the school successfully identified and applied for special assessment conditions for one student. At the time of the visit there were no students identified for the current year. Nationally in 2016, 5 percent of all NCEA candidates were entitled to special assessment conditions, the school is encouraged to continue to investigate students who may benefit from special assessment conditions.

Agreed action

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

- monitor students with Special Assessment Conditions entitlement. (*Assessment Rules for schools with Consent to Assess 2017, 5.5*)

How effectively does the school's internal and external moderation assure assessment quality?

Evidence found that internal and external moderation are ensuring assessment quality. (CAAS Guidelines 2.6iii & vi, and Assessment (including Examination) Rules for Schools with Consent to Assess 2017 6.4b)

Whangamata Area School has effective processes and procedures for managing internal moderation by:

- critiquing assessment material prior to its use
- verifying grade judgements of purposefully selected samples of student work
- documenting the internal moderation process for each standard using the *Internal Moderation Cover Sheet*
- requiring teachers to submit a copy of completed internal moderation cover sheets to the Principal's Nominee to confirm internal moderation has occurred.

Whangamata Area School has effective processes and procedures for managing external moderation by:

- selecting samples of student work for external moderation randomly to meet NZQA requirements
- ensuring samples of student work are appropriately stored so that they are available for external moderation
- requiring all relevant staff to complete a *Response to External Moderation* form and forwarding this to the Principal's Nominee.

Review the appropriateness of verifiers used Staff are aware of the requirement that verification must occur for all standards where results are reported to NZQA. Considering the low agreement rate in some areas, the appropriateness of the verifier selected should be reviewed. Any verifier used for the internal moderation of student work should be a subject specialist with recent standard specific knowledge.

Monitor the effectiveness of internal moderation undertaken Following a required action in the previous Managing National Assessment review, the Principal's Nominee requires a copy of the completed *Internal Moderation Cover Sheet* to be forwarded to him before results are reported to NZQA. As a next step, the school is encouraged to strengthen the system to ensure the effectiveness of the internal moderation process undertaken by staff, rather than simply checking the compliance aspect of an *Internal Moderation Cover Sheet*. This would ensure a more robust process undertaken by focusing on aspects such as the selection of material, appropriateness of verifier used, and evidence of discussions around borderline examples of student work having taken place.

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:

- review the appropriateness of verifiers used for internal moderation
- monitor the effectiveness of internal moderation undertaken.

How effectively does the school manage and make use of assessment-related data?

Evidence found that data management and use supports student achievement outcomes. (CAAS Guidelines 2.6v, 2.7i-iii)

Whangamata Area School effectively:

- **uses assessment-related data to support achievement outcomes for students by:**
 - reviewing results from the previous year to reflect on lessons learnt and to inform future teaching and assessment
 - monitoring student progress to identify learners at risk of not achieving their goals
 - using grade predictions to support students in tracking their progress
 - teachers annually reporting on results and progress to achieving annual goals to senior management and the Board of Trustees.

- **reports accurate achievement data by:**
 - ensuring all entries have a reported result
 - students monitoring accuracy of reported grades by signing declaration sheet following receipt of marked work
 - checking entries in externally assessed standards with students to limit late entries
 - submitting fees and financial assistance applications
 - using the Key Indicators to identify and resolve data submission errors.

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 found that school communication ensures understanding about assessment. (CAAS Guidelines 2.4i(f), 2.4v, 2.6vii, 2.7iib)

Whangamata Area School demonstrates effective processes and procedures for:

- ensuring students receive common format course outlines for all of their subjects
- communicating assessment policies and procedures to staff through guidelines and regular meetings involving all teachers of NCEA
- issuing students with information on NCEA written in a manner that can be easily understood
- communicating consistent and current assessment information to families and community through newsletters and online forums such as Facebook and Google Classroom
- reviewing communications annually to ensure they are current.

Relationships with external providers The school is aware of the requirement to ensure that there is a current and appropriate relationship documented with any external provider used. This could be through memoranda of understanding or a sub-contracting agreement. The management of these relationships currently rests with individual staff. The school agreed to review its system to ensure that a current and appropriate relationship is documented and these agreements are reconciled with reported results. This would allow the school to more easily identify that the use of the school's provider code, and the provider codes of external providers, meet NZQA requirements.

Consider mode of communication to students A hard copy of the *NCEA Student Information* booklet is presented to students at the start of each year through an assembly. It is timely to consider if the written form of the handbook is still the most effective means to communicate this information to all students.

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:

- reconcile memoranda of understanding and subcontracting agreements with reported results.

For consideration

To ensure that information about assessment to students, staff and families is current and accessible, the school is encouraged to consider:

- the mode by which student handbook is communicated.