

# Managing National Assessment Report

## Excellere College

September 2017

## What this report is about

This report summarises NZQA's review of how effectively Excellere 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 2017* (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
- *Excellere College NCEA Student Handbook 2016*
- *Excellere College NQF Operations Manual 2017 (Staff Handbook)*
- *Excellere College Board Governance Manual 2015*
- a sample of course outlines and tracking documents for students in Years 11, 12 and 13.

The School Relationship Manager met with the Principal's Nominee, three students, and Heads of Department for Digital Technology, Music, Science and Visual Art.

There was a report-back session with the Principal, Senior Leader 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

## Excellere College

28 September 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 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

Excellere College offers a range of academic and vocational assessment pathways to meets students' needs. They are well supported to set academic and career goals which are monitored by their teachers. Where manageable, students are assessed when ready, setting individual deadlines if appropriate. Teachers are developing a variety of ways of collecting evidence of achievement and the school is encouraging the use of digital technologies for learning and assessment.

Internal moderation is an embedded culture. All teachers have developed professional contacts with colleagues in other schools to verify a selection of grade judgements. The school has a sound agreement rate for external moderation and teachers plan to address any issues raised. Teachers value both the internal and external moderation processes and use it to for their professional learning as well as to confirm their assessment decisions.

The school demonstrates that it is capable of self-review. The recent focus has been to gather detailed data to be able track ongoing student progress and to improve the number of merit and excellence results.

A range of communication systems is in place to ensure staff, students and parents understand the NCEA qualification and the school's policy and procedures. Students appreciate the individual support provided by their teachers.

The Principal's Nominee is new in the role. He works in partnership with the Senior Leader to oversee the school's credible assessment practice and his common-sense approach is appreciated by the teachers.

### Areas for improvement

The school agrees that it will strengthen the process that confirms that issues raised in external moderation are addressed promptly. While there is no evidence to suggest that this is not happening, having a documented process would mean that board can be confident that concerns have been identified and effectively addressed in a timely manner.

When the class is small, the selection of student work for internal verification may include all samples, but for larger classes the selection should be purposeful and include work at grade boundaries. This provides assurance to the Principal's

Nominee that the process is robust, and teachers collect useful benchmarks samples while managing workload.

Student comments indicated that there may be some inconsistencies in managing deadlines and, that in some instances, there may be an excessive delay in getting results. The school agrees that it will investigate these concerns.

It is suggested that staff and student handbooks be reviewed annually to ensure they are up to date and reflect the practice in the school. As well, some refinements to the course outlines would clarify key information for students.

### **Agreed action**

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

- develop a process to monitor that the actions planned to address issues raised in external moderation reports are completed
- remind teachers that student work for internal verification should be selected purposefully to include work at grade boundaries
- review the course outlines and staff and student handbooks
- remind teachers to keep student results private.

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16 November 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 7 & 8 May 2014 Managing National Assessment Report** After the last Managing National Assessment review, there were a number of agreed actions.

- The school now has a system to ensure that once results are finalised, the eight samples of student work submitted for external moderation are selected by someone other than the marker.
- Teachers are being encouraged to share moderator feedback with their subject verifiers and they reported the professional value of these connections.
- There is still some progress needed to monitor that assessment statements include all information required about standards to be assessed.
- The assessment procedure documents have been updated; some suggestions for further refinements will be discussed in the communication section of this report.
- There is now an effective procedure to ensure that student entries are withdrawn from standards where there has not been reasonable opportunity to be assessed. In 2013 there were 28 percent of entries with no results, in 2016 this was reduced to less than three percent which is in line with other schools.

**Response to external moderation outcomes** The school has a sound agreement rate between teachers and NZQA moderators which reflects the effective internal moderation processes. The school requires teachers to develop an action plan to rectify issues identified in external moderation reports. The next step is for the new Principal's Nominee to ensure that there is a robust process that checks that effective follow up actions have been completed.

### 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)*

Excellere College identified that while it generally meets its target for students achieving an NCEA, the rate of certificate endorsements, particularly at excellence is lower than in similar schools. As a result, it has made it a focus to increase the rate of merit and excellence grades. To support this, there is now a clear expectation that teachers will know how students are progressing and give parents targeted feedback on how students can improve.

The school has developed a tracking system that allows close monitoring of student progress. This is used in fortnightly meetings to check that students are on track and to plan interventions and support for identified students. The tracking system, which is continually being reviewed and improved, means that students, teachers and

parents have access to detailed information about individual progress, including suggested next steps.

All departments carry out an annual review of outcomes in each subject against the charter goals for the school's Board of Trustees. This analysis is expected to identify areas for improvement.

These actions indicate that the school has the capacity to engage in self-review. The next step is to plan school-wide ongoing self-review around assessment practice that involves all teachers. This would ensure that processes are robust and are consistently followed and lead to the best outcomes for students,

### **Agreed action**

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

- develop a process to monitor that the actions planned to address issues raised in external moderation reports are completed.

### **For consideration**

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

- plan for ongoing self-review around assessment practice that involves all teachers who assess against standards on the NZ Qualifications Framework.

## 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)*

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

- making applications for special assessment conditions and providing entitled students with appropriate assistance
- helping them to set goals and providing differentiated assessment within courses to meet student needs, interests and future pathways
- managing resubmissions in accordance with NZQA's expectations, or providing a further assessment opportunity if manageable
- using google docs to:
  - provide on-going feedback and feedforward information to support students present their best evidence
  - monitor authenticity by viewing revision changes
- supporting teachers to gather evidence in a variety of ways
- where manageable, assessing when the student is ready.

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

- managing appeals and investigating possible breaches of assessment rules
- informing students about the need to present authentic work
- tracking the progress of individual students at the fortnightly meetings and using the information to provide additional tuition or amend an assessment programme
- ensuring derived grades are based on standard-specific authentic evidence from practice examinations.

**Managing deadlines and delays in final marks** The students commented that some teachers were inconsistent in managing deadlines and expressed frustration if they had worked to meet a published deadline while other students were given an extension without a valid reason. It is suggested that reasonable deadlines are set after negotiating with students and late submissions dealt with according to the school's published process. Senior management has agreed to review school practice and clarify expectations with staff.

A long delay in students getting confirmed results can mean that there is no opportunity for a resubmission and the appeal process may be compromised. In a few instances, students noted that there was a very long delay in receiving a grade for an assessment although they did understand that the moderation process takes time. While there is no evidence that delays are widespread, it is recommended that the school investigates and, if necessary, address the issue.



**Reminder that student results must be kept private** The students spoken with reported that some teachers shared results with the class. The school should review practice to be confident that they are meeting their obligations under the *1993 Privacy Act*.

### **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 deadlines are managed to be fair to all students
- remind teachers to keep student results private.

### **For consideration**

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

- investigate and, if indicated, resolve lengthy delays between students completing work and receiving their grade.

## 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)*

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

- ensuring teachers are provided with clear expectations on internal moderation requirements
  - requiring that all assessment materials are critiqued prior to use
  - stipulating that teachers must develop professional contact with subject specialists in other schools to verify a sample of student work
- monitoring that all of the quality assurance processes have been completed before results are submitted to NZQA.

### **Excellere College has effective processes and procedures for managing external moderation by:**

- selecting samples of student work for external moderation randomly to NZQA requirements
- ensuring samples of student work are provided for external moderation by being adequately stored.

**Teachers confirm the value of the professional contacts used in verification** It is evident that the connections teachers have with colleagues in other schools to verify a sample of their assessor judgements are highly valued. Some of the discussions are held face to face, others by email. Teachers are expected to keep a record of decisions on the digital internal moderation cover sheet and some very good practice was seen, although this was not consistent. The monitoring process should check that the verifier discussions are recorded.

To ensure the maximum benefit of the verification process, the student work should be selected purposefully to include work at grade boundaries; it is not necessary for all judgements to be reviewed unless it is a very small cohort or the teacher is inexperienced with the standard. A strategic selection can reduce workload for teachers.

**Teachers are submitting work digitally for external moderation** At the time of the review, the school was in the process of submitting work for external moderation. The Principal's Nominee reported that about half of the work has been submitted digitally and expects this to increase as more students produce work digitally.

### **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:

- remind teachers that student work for internal verification should be selected purposefully to include work at grade boundaries.

## 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)*

### **Excellere College effectively:**

- uses assessment-related data to support achievement outcomes for students by:
  - identifying and tracking priority learners, and students at risk of not achieving an NCEA qualification, and providing appropriate support
  - providing grade summaries on request to students to assist them to monitor their progress
  - encouraging students to register and use their NZQA Learner Login
  - carrying out a Learning Area Review at the end of every term and analysing annual achievement data to identify areas for improvement.
- reports accurate achievement data by:
  - ensuring that data files are submitted to NZQA in a timely manner
  - using the Key Indicators checklist to identify and resolve data errors
  - requiring teachers to carry out a “buddy check” to ensure data is accurate before results are submitted to NZQA.

**Better system for checking entries and results** To ensure the accuracy of the data, teachers make rigorous checks prior to the key dates. The school identified that students were not very effective at checking data and it is suggested that teachers help and encourage students to regularly use their NZQA Learner Login. This would enable students to check their progress and provide an additional check that accurate data has been submitted to NZQA.

### **For consideration**

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

- having teachers help students to check entry and results data on the NZQA login page.

## 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)*

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

- ensuring students receive outlines for all courses they undertake
- supporting teachers new to the school.

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

- providing a variety of ways to ensure that students and their parents can be well informed about expectations and responsibilities
- holding an NCEA information evening for parents and students at the start of the year; students reported that this was appreciated
- providing opportunities for teachers to know about assessment best practice.

**Review of documentation indicated** Clear and consistent information about the assessment programme in each course helps students to plan to meet expectations. The course statements provided for this review varied in format and some were missing key information such as whether some standards were optional, if a course is endorsable, which standards count towards literacy or numeracy and the provision of any further assessment opportunities. Teachers are moving to have the information in a digital format; this will provide an opportunity to review the content and format.

Students are aware of expectations and their responsibilities and the NCEA student handbook is available to parents on the school's website. However, to avoid possible misunderstandings, it is suggested that the handbook is reviewed as not all information is up to date. The Principal's Nominee has been provided with a checklist of what could be included in the document.

Along with the student handbook, the NQF Operations Manual (teacher handbook) should be reviewed annually. The New Zealand Qualifications Framework (NZQF) replaced the NQF in 2010; the title of the handbook should be changed to reflect this. For some processes (appeals, managing late assessments, managing external moderation, data accuracy checks), the school's processes should be reviewed to ensure that practice aligns with the documentation.

The Principal's Nominee agrees that the documentation around assessment practice will be reviewed.

### **Check that there are memoranda of understanding with all external providers**

Schools are required to have a current memorandum of understanding with any external providers. The Senior Leader, who was the previous Principal's Nominee, currently manages these. They were not sighted during the visit, however, the school is confident that they are all completed.

It is suggested that when the responsibility for managing this process moves to the Principal's Nominee, consideration be given to storing the documents digitally.

**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:

- review the course outlines and staff and student handbooks.