

Managing National Assessment Report

Mount Aspiring College

March 2019

What this report is about

This report summarises NZQA's review of how effectively Mount Aspiring 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, 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 materials:

- information on their actions and self-review since the last Managing National Assessment report
- *Mount Aspiring College, Staff Procedures, NZQF Handbook 2019* (Staff Handbook)
- *Mount Aspiring College, Student Regulations, NZQF Handbook 2019* (Student Handbook)
- *Mount Aspiring College – Quality Management System, Standard 1.2.6 Assessment and Moderation*
- online link to *MAC Wiki* which includes *NZQA Information* and course outlines for Years 11, 12 and 13.

The School Relationship Manager met with:

- the Principal's Nominee
- Heads of Learning Area for:
 - Health and Physical Education
 - Languages
 - Science
 - Technology
- three students.

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

Mount Aspiring College

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

What the school is doing well

Mount Aspiring College effectively demonstrates the capacity to undertake its own review and evaluation of the effectiveness of its NZQA assessment practices and procedures. Review processes are led by the Principal's Nominee, Heads of Learning Area and senior management, with input from all stakeholders, ensuring shared ownership of the process and outcomes. Self-review has led to improvement in assessment practice to better meet the needs of students, including the development of new courses and ensuring the standards assessed maximise students' opportunities to gain qualifications. It has also resulted in enhancements to communications and student understanding of assessment related processes.

The school ensures students can maximise their achievement by offering a range of opportunities to meet their needs. Assessment is differentiated through multiple course choices in core subject areas, and some individualisation of courses and contexts where appropriate. Opportunities are extended by using external providers to offer courses and standards that the school would otherwise be unable to provide. Identified students receive approved special assessment conditions and are well supported. Practices are sound and consistently applied.

Robust internal and external moderation processes, including monitoring and follow up of any necessary actions, are embedded across the school ensuring that only credible results are reported to NZQA. This effective practice is reflected in the high level of consistency between teacher and NZQA external moderator judgements.

Data management and use effectively supports student achievement outcomes. Assessment data is managed to ensure results reported to NZQA are timely. Achievement data is analysed to review department practice and courses, set strategic direction and evaluate the effectiveness of changes. Staff and students can monitor progress towards completing qualifications, and results data contributes to identifying and intervening with students at risk of not achieving a qualification.

A range of effective targeted communication is in place to ensure staff, students and caregivers have a common understanding of the NCEA qualification and the school's assessment policy and procedures.

Areas for improvement

Processes are in place so that students and staff check the accuracy of results reported to NZQA, but the checks also need to cover the withdrawing of entries in internal standards. The school must ensure that all internal entries to NZQA have a result reported or are withdrawn if the student has not had an adequate opportunity to be assessed. This would mean that data sent reflects the assessment undertaken and ensures that students have an accurate assessment programme recorded to assist them with tracking their progress.

Other next steps for the school to consider are detailed in the body of the report.

Agreed action

The school agreed that an action will improve the quality of their assessment systems. This is:

- ensure that all entries in internal standards made to NZQA have a corresponding result attached or are withdrawn if there has not been an adequate opportunity to be assessed.

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20 May 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 13 October 2015 Managing National Assessment report

There were no action items from the previous Managing National Assessment report.

Response to external moderation outcomes The school has effective processes to respond to external moderation. These ensure senior management are fully informed of issues and involved in the review of outcomes where required. Feedback from external moderation shows there is a high level of consistency between assessor and moderator judgements overall. The school actively manages any ongoing issues to resolve them.

The Principal's Nominee summarises any concerns and positives for each moderation report. Heads of Learning access the reports online and understand the need to reflect on each one, seek clarifications and/or appeal the outcome, and to request professional development where appropriate. Any required actions are discussed, and their completion checked by the Principal's Nominee.

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)

Mount Aspiring College has a strong focus on self-review. It is coordinated and broadly relies on the Heads of Learning leading the review of curriculum issues and the Principal's Nominee working with the Deans to review NZQA related processes. The impacts of changes are evaluated with the stakeholders concerned. This approach provides assurance to senior management that concerns and potential improvements relating to assessment practices are effectively identified and appropriately addressed.

The introduction of Heads of Learning has meant they work with senior management on the bigger picture and department leaders focus on running departments. Joining departments together under the umbrella of a Learning Area has also led to a more united approach and given smaller departments increased opportunities to work with their colleagues.

Individual teachers gather student voice on their teaching and the course. This feedback, along with teachers' thoughts, are discussed at a department level to inform possible improvements. Any major changes, such as the introduction of new courses, are signposted in term two for the Heads of Learning to investigate. Heads of Learning prepare annual review reports. These are read and collated by senior management, along with exam results, in an online shareable document with

common themes and threads identified. Action points are then taken to the Board of Trustees who meet with individual Heads of Learning to discuss any concerns they have and how they can be best supported.

The Heads of Learning are currently looking at the Year 7 to Year 13 progression to see if there can be improved coherence or learning and assessment to lead to better student outcomes. They have recently reviewed the number of credits offered in a course and decided ideally it should be 20 or below to create more in-depth learning and improved levels of achievement. After individual department self-review, some courses do continue to assess more credits due to the nature of the standards and assessments. One subject area is trialling delivering some content which is not going to be directly assessed.

In response to a drop in the number of students gaining the reading requirements for University Entrance by the end of Year 12, the school reviewed all the standards offered across Year 12 courses. This resulted in the reintroduction of a specific standard to the Level 2 English course, which led to higher attainment in 2018.

Communications have been reviewed resulting in using the school wiki to present information, so it is standardised and always available. The wiki is supplemented by individual courses adding specific information, usually through the learning management system. Review has also led to inclusion of information on Special Assessment Conditions into handbooks.

In reviewing NZQA related processes the Principal's Nominee has made forms available digitally to make it easier for students to access and for them to be processed. Concerned over an increase in the number of appeals, the Principal's Nominee investigated this to determine if there was a genuine issue with assessor judgments or if it was being driven by students' desire for improved grades. It was decided there was not an issue with the accuracy of results so the reason for appeals was clarified with students.

The school's self-review is a continual process with the impact of changes systematically reviewed. Future developments are planned, including exploring the provision of an integrated Year 13 course and providing more vocational pathways to cater for students who in previous years may have not chosen to continue their time at school.

No action required

No issues with the school's response to NZQA external reviews 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)

Mount Aspiring College has effective processes and procedures for meeting the assessment needs of their students by:

- differentiating assessment through offering several courses in core subjects and, where appropriate, tailoring assessment opportunities to individuals within a course
- counselling students and giving them trial activities to help them consider if distance learning courses are appropriate for their learning style
- ensuring that students potentially entitled to special assessment conditions are identified and support trialled
- clearly informing staff of students' special assessment conditions and readily providing appropriate assistance
- where practical, assessing when ready.

Mount Aspiring College 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 opportunities
- collecting credible evidence of student achievement for derived grade applications
- meeting the requirements of the *Privacy Act 1993*.

The schools focuses 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 student selections through school-based classes, or through a range of external providers, including a virtual learning network, Trades Academy, Star and Gateway courses and Te Aho o Te Kura Pounamu (The Correspondence School). The school also provides a Pathways programme designed for students to complete a NCEA certificate over two years.

Māori and Pacific student engagement and success in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) subjects Over the last five years there has been little difference between the success rate of Year 13 students of different ethnicities achieving one or more STEM subject at Level 3, or three or more STEM subjects a Level 3. The school believes this is due to their inclusive practice and catering to individual student need.

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)

Mount Aspiring College has effective processes and procedures for managing internal moderation by:

- setting a clear expectation of staff to refer to clarifications and previous moderation reports as the first step in the process
- ensuring all new or modified assessment materials are critiqued prior to use
- using subject specialists, within and outside the school, to verify a purposefully selected sample of student work to ensure assessment judgements are consistent with the standard
- documenting the quality assurance process on a physical or digital *Internal Moderation Cover Sheet*
- retaining and updating work to be used as exemplars for students and benchmarking for assessor judgements
- following appropriate processes for moderating Industry Training Organisation administered standards.

Mount Aspiring College has effective processes and procedures for managing external moderation by:

- developing teachers' capacity to suggest appropriate standards to be included in, and negotiating suitable changes to, the moderation plan
- selecting samples of student work randomly to NZQA requirements
- ensuring student work is available by the Principal's Nominee knowing the location of the materials.

Effective monitoring of internal moderation Processes assure senior management that all reported results are credible. Heads of Learning Area, or a delegated person in the Learning Area, proactively monitor the completion of all aspects of internal moderation.

The school has moved away from the model of Learning Areas completing an audit form, to the Principal's Nominee annually visiting each area to discuss all NCEA related processes and formulate any actions required. Details of the meeting and follow up on any actions are recorded on a spreadsheet. This ensures key personnel are clearly informed and the school is able to mitigate possible continuity issues due to any personnel changes.

Focus on reducing workload by considering verification requirements for sufficiency The school should consider providing staff with further guidance on sufficient verification by the strategic selection of student work.

Strategic selection has the potential to reduce verifier workload, without compromising the quality of the assurance process. There is no fixed, or predetermined, number of pieces of student work that must be verified. The sample size will be determined by factors such as assessor experience, feedback from

external moderation, the availability of good quality grade boundary exemplars, and number of students assessed.

Most Learning Areas believed the number of pieces of work they chose to verify contributed to their professional development, but some agreed they could perhaps reduce the number and still meet verification requirements.

Develop a policy for the storage of digital assessment material Learning Areas are storing digitally produced work but the school is aware that there are no clearly set out processes to ensure it will remain accessible. Developing a policy for the storage of digital material will enable the school to ensure it is secure, can continue to be easily accessed, shared with outside verifiers, and be available, if required, for external moderation.

For consideration

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

- developing a policy for the storage of digital assessment material.

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)

Mount Aspiring College effectively uses assessment-related data to support achievement outcomes for students by:

- Learning Areas analysing results with a focus on next steps, which informs the modification of courses and teaching practice
- analysing results comparatively and longitudinally to highlight common themes to guide strategic direction.

Mount Aspiring College reports accurate achievement data by:

- reporting results to NZQA on a timely and regular basis
- effectively encouraging students to check entries and results in the student management system
- effectively encouraging students to register their NZQA Learner Login
- having student and teacher checks and sign off processes at key times during the year, and storing physical copies centrally so they can be referred to if necessary
- closely managing 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 current memoranda of understanding
- resolving any issues highlighted in the *Key Indicator Checklist*.

Student progress is effectively tracked and interventions put in place to improve achievement outcomes The school effectively uses data to track student progress, with a focus on improving student achievement outcomes. The school submits all entries in their first data entry file to NZQA, thereby ensuring students, parents and staff can see the full year's assessment programme. This allows them to track results and plan ahead.

Where possible students continue with the same whānau teacher throughout the senior schooling. This allows them to build an informed and supportive relationship, and they discuss progress in relation to individual goals that students have set. Students who are at risk of not achieving to their potential are identified by Deans and have interventions implemented as necessary to improve their assessment outcomes. Interventions are based on further information that is collated by the Dean. These can include whānau teacher and class teacher involvement, mentoring by a teacher who has a particular connection with a student, reviewing goals, individualising assessment programmes and parental involvement.

Ensure all internal entries are withdrawn if a result is not recorded The school needs to ensure that in all subject areas all internal standard entries to NZQA have a result reported, or are withdrawn if the student has not had an adequate opportunity to be assessed. This will ensure that data sent reflects the assessment undertaken. This will further strengthen the current teacher and student checking of the accuracy of entries and results, and ensure that students have an accurate assessment programme recorded to assist them with tracking their progress.

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:

- ensure that all entries in internal standards made to NZQA have a corresponding result attached or are withdrawn if there has not been an adequate opportunity to be assessed.

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))

Mount Aspiring College has effective processes and procedures for:

- ensuring students have access through the school *MAC Wiki* to outlines for all courses they undertake
- communicating assessment policy and procedure to staff, students and their families using a range of methods
- encouraging the completion of financial assistance applications where appropriate and the payment of NZQA fees
- assisting students and staff to manage assessment workload by publishing and updating assessment dates in an online calendar.

Mount Aspiring College assists common understanding of assessment practice by:

- providing access to the student handbook online and distributing by email to parents
- using a variety of year level meetings led by the Principal's Nominee and Deans to explain and remind students about assessment policy and procedures
- presenting NZQA and school assessment related processes at parent meetings and through regular and timely reminders in newsletters
- inducting new staff to familiarise them with assessment and moderation processes.

Students show a good understanding of how NCEA works and school assessment procedures Students could clearly articulate how NCEA works. They understood school processes such as extensions, moderation, dealing with authenticity, derived grades and appeals, and felt their teachers applied them consistently.

Consider reviewing the course outlines template to consistently and clearly show how standards contribute to qualifications Course outlines follow a template to present information about the standards being assessed. The school should consider reviewing how the template is used so it consistently shows how standards contribute to the literacy and numeracy requirements to gain a NCEA certificate and to the reading and writing requirements for University Entrance. The school should also consider if it can more clearly show if a course is University Entrance approved. Including this information consistently in all course outlines will help students with their understanding and management of their progress towards qualifications.

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 use of the course outline template to consistently and clearly show how standards contribute to qualifications.