

# Managing National Assessment Report

## Aurora College

July 2021

## What this report is about

This report summarises NZQA's review of how effectively Aurora 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 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
- *NCEA Assessment Good Practice Guide for Teachers, Aurora College 2021*
- *Student Handbook on the National Qualifications Framework at Aurora College, 2021*
- a sample of course outlines for Years 11, 12 and 13.

The School Relationship Manager met with:

- the Principal's Nominee
- Learning Area Leads for:
  - English
  - Mathematics
  - Physical Education and Sport
  - Science
  - Social Sciences
  - Technology
- 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

## Aurora College

7 July 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 restrictions.

### What the school is doing well

Aurora College provides assessment opportunities that cater for the pathway and achievement priorities of its community. Staff work collaboratively to weave together pastoral, programming and assessment responses so that each student's learning is appropriate to their needs. All teachers take responsibility for tracking students' progress towards qualifications throughout the year, and this is reflected in the ongoing review of courses and assessments by Learning Area Leads.

Teachers interviewed described a range of responsive and personalised assessment practices. These include offering multi-level courses, using relevant contexts, assessing when ready and supporting students to access special assessment conditions. The use of outside providers allows the school to offer a range of vocational pathway opportunities.

Staff have a shared understanding of the importance of quality assuring student grades. They work closely within Learning Areas and with subject experts outside the school to confirm that assessor judgements are consistent with national standards. This collaborative approach means that moderation processes are frequently discussed in meetings and informal conversations, supported by the experienced Principal's Nominee.

Data management and use effectively supports student achievement outcomes. Assessment data is managed to ensure entries and results reported to NZQA are timely and accurate.

The school communications allow staff, students and caregivers to gain a common understanding of NCEA and school assessment procedures, taking literacy and digital access challenges within the school community into account.

### **Areas for improvement**

The school's quality assurance processes can be strengthened by actively monitoring the completion of internal moderation. This would provide improved quality assurance of all results, inform senior management of any concerns, and mitigate possible issues arising from any personnel changes.

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

### **Agreed action**

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

- ensure monitoring of internal assessment moderation is documented so that senior management is confident that all results reported are quality assured.

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25 August 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 10 May 2017 Managing National Assessment Report** The school has partially addressed the three items detailed in this report by:

- monitoring internal moderation processes in departments through informal discussions, department meetings, and Learning Area Lead meetings. The next step is to document the monitoring.
- teachers and the Principal's Nominee checking that all internal entries made to NZQA have a corresponding result attached or are withdrawn if there has not been an adequate opportunity to be assessed. This was more challenging in 2020 due to COVID-19 disruptions resulting in course changes for students.
- using Homebase sessions to increase student use of their NZQA Learner login. This should be further encouraged so that all students are able to access the functions available.

**Response to external moderation outcomes** The school has effective processes to respond to external moderation. Learning Area Leads discuss external moderators' reports with the Principal's Nominee when they receive them, and any required actions are identified and carried out as soon as possible. Learning Area Leads and teachers in charge of subject areas advise the Principal's Nominee when changes suggested by external moderation have been made and relevant documents are updated to reflect these modifications. Teachers appreciate the feedback from both NZQA external moderation and Industry Training Organisation external moderation processes.

### 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)*

A more methodical approach to internal review is needed to help in responding to external review and evaluating school-wide assessment practices. Internal review by school leaders and Learning Area Leads at Aurora College is currently focussed on improving assessment practices and outcomes for individuals and groups of students. A sustainable approach would involve examining systems and processes to ensure that they contribute to credible assessment and ongoing improvement.

Staff are involved in ongoing review to maximise opportunities and support available for students. This emphasis is evident at every level of the school where there is a collaborative effort amongst staff to enable students to achieve at their best. Planning

for student programmes is done holistically with a pastoral and an achievement focus, which promotes students being assessed when ready.

A target of improving student ownership of their academic progress has contributed to overall improved achievement for students in Level 1 and 2 NCEA, including priority learners. Māori achievement has improved in comparison to New Zealand European achievement at Level 1 since the introduction of closer mentoring of students and monitoring of their programmes. Staff have been working hard to make students responsible for tracking their own progress; holding assemblies throughout the year to acknowledge academic success as it happens. Deans and the Principal's Nominee also work closely with students who are aiming to achieve University Entrance.

Teachers in each learning area are actively involved in reviewing programmes, with a goal of offering a wide range of opportunities that allow every student to achieve as themselves, using the flexibility of the NCEA to do so. Initiatives taken because of this review include trialling new modes of assessment, accessing NZQA assessment practice training, adapting learning opportunities and tasks to suit local contexts, and continuous development of students' individual learning plans. Staff work together to provide opportunities for students to achieve, across the curriculum and outside a traditional timetable if needed.

Staff are involved in collective learning and review projects through the Invercargill Kāhui Ako and the introduction of Poutama Pounamu processes. Each of these is a key aspect of the school's data analysis and evaluation and complements the school's vision for catering to the needs of its learners. The Kāhui Ako engages teachers in the review and development of the local curriculum, digital fluency, and digital learning, as well as pursuing Achievement Challenges aimed at improving achievement rates in Level 2 NCEA. The Poutama Pounamu Rongohia te Hau data gathering tool provides a different lens for collating evidence to inform and develop culturally responsive teaching and leadership across the curriculum. Teachers also incorporate their knowledge of students' challenges and strengths within the community into every aspect of their review.

### **For consideration**

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

- developing sustainable processes to respond to external review and evaluate school-wide assessment practices.

## 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)*

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

- using a range of Unit Standards across the curriculum where this supports student achievement, skill building, and career interests
- ensuring that all pathways are open to all students, by offering multi-level classes, open entry, and differentiated contexts and assessments in senior courses
- collaborating across learning areas to combine assessments and contexts and maximise students' achievement

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

- using a range of means to ensure the authenticity of student work, including online checks and student conferencing
- managing missed and late assessments while ensuring that students are assessed when ready
- reducing the need for resubmission and further assessment opportunities by providing feedback to students and actively monitoring their progress

**Assessment opportunities meet student needs** To ensure that assessment opportunities meet the needs of students, teachers focus on understanding their individual requirements for support and extension. They provide advice and guidance to students to best prepare them for assessment, encouraging them to monitor their own progress and providing advice when appropriate. This has reduced the need for resubmission and is encouraging students to ask for more feedback from teachers in class.

Students interviewed appreciated the degree to which teachers adapted their programmes to suit their intended career pathways and educational aspirations, considering their wellbeing throughout the process. The small classes in many areas allow teachers to adapt programmes, including offering further assessment opportunities. Practice external assessments are held in class for most subjects to help students feel confident and relaxed. To complement online teaching and learning, the school is planning to begin entering students in external digital examinations in 2021. Students interviewed appreciated the degree to which teachers adapted their programmes to suit their intended career pathways and educational aspirations, considering their wellbeing throughout the process.

**Student timetables are adapted to provide a wider range of opportunities** The school offers a number of opportunities for senior students that run outside a traditional timetable structure. All year 12 students participate in an alternative programme on Fridays that involves polytechnic courses, Gateway work placements, and outdoor education opportunities; ensuring that all students are learning outside the school environment. The school's study centre is open and staffed for catch-up classes three afternoons per week, providing students with access to the internet

after hours. The school's Service Academy is a military based teaching and learning environment in which students are supported to gain NCEA Level 2 through a wide range of skills training and assessments.

**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 2021 6.4b)*

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

- ensuring all assessment materials are critiqued prior to use and checked against recent clarifications and moderator feedback
- using an internal moderation cover sheet to record critiquing and verification processes
- selecting work at grade boundaries for verification
- using subject specialists to verify selected samples of student work, including engaging with experts outside the school for single teacher subjects and to support ongoing teacher development
- keeping benchmark samples to inform future assessment decisions.

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

- ensuring samples of work are provided by managing and reviewing the storage of assessment evidence for both digital and physical sources of evidence
- selecting samples of student work for external moderation randomly to NZQA requirements, when standard entry numbers require this.

**Strengthen the monitoring of internal moderation** Learning Area Leads must document the completion of internal moderation to ensure all results reported have been subject to the required quality assurance process and are credible. The current process needs to be strengthened to include documentation of the completion of moderation processes for each standard, before results are submitted to NZQA.

The collaborative staff environment contributes to many informal discussions about moderation. The Principal's Nominee has clear expectations of teachers and what needs to be retained within learning areas to support internal and 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 monitoring of internal assessment moderation is documented so that senior management is confident that all results reported are quality assured.

## 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)*

### **Aurora College effectively uses assessment-related data to support achievement outcomes for students by:**

- using an app to support students' understanding of their learning and career pathways, which will soon link to the school's Learning Management System
- evaluating the effectiveness of assessment programmes, including using student voice to inform changes, to better reflect student abilities and interests
- teachers participating in Kāhui Ako professional learning groups that analyse and inform areas of their practice
- the Principal providing regular updates to the Board of Trustees on student engagement and achievement, and using this analysis to inform strategic goals and action plans
- teachers, students and whānau discussing student progress and achievement in three-way conferences
- teachers working collaboratively to create assessment programmes for students that give them the best chance at success in all their courses
- encouraging a culture in which teachers can innovate, reflect, evaluate, and make changes to courses throughout the year to suit student needs and aspirations.

### **Aurora College reports accurate achievement data by:**

- actively supporting students to track their own achievement, including the use of the school's Student Management System
- reporting results against the correct code of outside providers with whom the school holds current Memoranda of Understanding
- entering and withdrawing students on time, to meet NZQA deadlines for internal and external assessment entries.

**Students should be encouraged to access their NZQA login** The school should 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 uptake and linking through a mentoring app available on student phones.

### **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))*

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

- ensuring students receive digital outlines for all courses they undertake
- providing access to student results through the school's Student Management System portal to students and their whānau, and encouraging the use of the portal in students' Homebase classes
- developing students' pathway and careers understanding

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

- using Learning Area and staff meetings to explain procedures to new teachers
- encouraging students to approach teachers when they have any questions or concerns about their programmes or assessments, and supporting them with integrated guidance, curriculum, and assessment systems when they do so.

**Clarification of assessment practices** Reviewing the current means of communicating assessment information to ensure they are fit for purpose would support a more consistent understanding by students of NCEA requirements and the school's procedures. Students interviewed for this review did not know that there was a student NCEA handbook. They described learning about NCEA through teachers' explanations as being effective, but they would have appreciated more preparation 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 to ensure that they are fit for purpose.