

# **Managing National Assessment Report**

## **Vanguard Military School**

**March 2018**

## What this report is about

This report summarises NZQA's review of how effectively Vanguard Military 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 2018* (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
- *Vanguard Military School Staff Handbook 2018*
- *Vanguard Military School Recruit and Parent/Caregiver Handbook 2018* including course outlines for Years 11, 12 and 13
- samples of departmental annual review reports.

The School Relationship Managers met with the Principal's Nominee, three students, and Heads of Subject for Engineering, English, History, Mathematics, Science/Biology and Te Reo Māori.

There was a report-back session with the Chief Executive Officer, the Principal and the 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

## Vanguard Military School

**22 March 2018**

### **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**

Since its establishment in 2014, Vanguard Military School has worked hard to develop fair, consistent and valid assessment policies and processes, which support student achievement. They have established a culture of collective responsibility for student achievement that provides students with assessment opportunities tailored to their individual need.

The school is proud of their students' qualifications success. This success is the result of several factors, including the school using their unique context to gather student evidence for assessment. They use instructional leadership so that students are clear about assessment expectations. A military focus helps students relate to assessment context. Teachers are encouraged to be flexible in terms of the timing of assessment to ensure that students are only assessed when ready.

Internal moderation is embedded practice at Vanguard Military School and ensures quality assessment. External moderation confirms the quality of assessment undertaken. The systems to monitor both forms of moderation allow school leaders to identify areas of good practice and those that need improvement.

Data management practices ensure that entries and results made to NZQA are accurate, timely and complete. The use of data is still under development, in part as it is only now after four years of operation that trends and patterns are identifiable. As their data history grows the school will have access to a wider range of information it can use to support the annual review processes already established.

### **Areas for consideration**

As part of the annual review of achievement, having teachers at the subject level compare results against an appropriate benchmark external to the school will provide useful data to inform subject review and support continuous improvement. For example, the comparison could be by subject nationally or with that subject in schools of similar type or student cohort.

Providing students with a simple recording framework to track their own achievement will complement the school's current tracking systems.

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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 28 May 2015 Managing National Assessment Report** The 2015 review was the first for the school. The three agreed actions required teachers to summarise verification discussions, monitor external examination entries and add information to parents and students about adjusting courses. They have all been carried out.

**Response to external moderation outcomes appropriate** The school's external moderation response process effectively assures assessment quality. Teachers provide the Principal's Nominee with written summaries of outcomes and evidence that issues identified in external moderation reports are satisfactorily resolved.

### 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)*

Vanguard Military School continues to develop and embed effective review practices with the aim of ensuring assessment integrity, fairness, consistency and validity. They also reflect on issues arising from unexpected events, from regular review of reports, checks, and attestations, and from student achievement data to help them to confirm whether their aim is being met.

For example, in 2016 the school made a substantive change to their policy of entering all students in all standards. This change was in response to evaluation of achievement data which showed students voiding papers or absenting themselves in external examinations. Entry into a standard is now consistent with the pathway the student is on and students are given the option of entering for specific external standards.

Regular checks are used to affirm that process expectations are being met. The Principal has developed a self-review template for key assessment practices. He completes these annually to evaluate efficacy and identify areas for improvement. To supplement this, he uses the outcomes of monitoring processes carried out by the Principal's Nominee and the detailed written reflection of teachers on annual achievement by standard.

As a charter school with externally set targets, a very high priority is placed on achievement and meeting student needs. The school is proud that targets are met and that their rate of achievement exceeds that of students nationally. Despite this, student achievement and meeting student need is constantly under review by the school.

They report that in response to recent review findings they have implemented the following initiatives:

- undertaking more baseline testing to establish student abilities and needs, including special assessment conditions
- bridging programmes that incorporate English and Mathematics to help students who arrive in Year 11 with a low level of literacy and numeracy
- structuring courses and modifying programmes so students can develop and access NCEA Level 1, 2 and 3 assessment appropriate to them.

The school's use of data to inform review is still under development, in part as it is only now, after four years of operation, that trends and patterns can be identified. One next step is to consider how to use benchmarks to support further reflection on the success of the initiatives undertaken and resourcing provided, as detailed in the Data section of this report.

### **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 2018 5.5)*

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

- assessing when ready, including the adjustment of timelines and deadlines where needed
- applying for special assessment conditions, including the use of school based evidence where applicable
- providing a core curriculum focussed on Mathematics, English, Science and Physical Training so that students have a foundation that they can build on
- developing a personalised pathway plan on enrolment that is reviewed annually against achievement
- providing differentiated courses within subjects to provide suitable achievement pathways
- following the instructional model used in the delivery of all aspects of school practice, so that students are clear about expectations
- using the school's military context to structure courses of interest
- working collegially to identify evidence produced in one course that can contribute to assessment of a standard in another.

### **Vanguard Military School has effective processes and procedures for:**

- managing missed and late assessment
- providing appropriate opportunities for resubmission and further assessment
- student appeal of assessment-related decisions
- ensuring evidence for derived grades is valid
- managing the authenticity of student work
- meeting the requirements of the Privacy Act 1993.

### **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 2018 6.4b)*

### **Vanguard Military School has effective processes and procedures for managing internal moderation by:**

- preparing all assessment materials before the start of each school year to ensure they are critiqued prior to use
- using subject specialists to verify a selected sample of student work, including compensating those external to the school for their time and expertise
- documenting discussions between the assessor and verifier on the internal moderation cover sheet and identifying benchmark samples to help inform future decisions
- monitoring that the process has occurred, by the Principal's Nominee collecting for every standard assessed, a copy of the completed cover sheet and tracking receipt on a spreadsheet.

### **Vanguard Military School has effective processes and procedures for managing external moderation by:**

- selecting samples of student work for external moderation randomly to NZQA requirements
- the Principal's Nominee using the external moderation application to prepare and submit all requested standards on behalf of teachers
- ensuring samples of student work are provided for external moderation by being adequately stored.

### **Focus on reducing workload by considering verification requirements for sufficiency**

Internal moderation is embedded practice at Vanguard Military School and ensures quality assessment. Teachers assure the quality of grades awarded by including work at grade boundaries when verifying assessor judgements. However most of those interviewed verify more samples of student work than this.

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.

## 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)*

### Vanguard Military School effectively:

- uses assessment-related data to support achievement outcomes for students by:
  - Heads of Subject reporting annually to the Principal their analysis of student achievement by standard to improve assessment programmes
  - Senior leadership tracking student progress in the second half of the year to identify those at risk of not achieving qualifications
  - providing students with updates of their results on request.
- reports accurate achievement data by:
  - students signing receipt of grades acknowledging they are correct on return of marked work after each assessment
  - the Principal's Nominee monitoring completion of student signoff sheets
  - ensuring that for every entry made a result is reported
  - monitoring student entries in external assessments to ensure they match their learning programme
  - students checking their results and entries with teachers once or twice every term
  - checking that the school has consent for every standard assessed and that Memoranda of Understanding are in place for all assessment carried out by external providers.

### Using an external benchmark enhances subject achievement data analysis

When evaluating subject achievement, comparing results against an appropriate benchmark external to the school will provide useful data to inform self-review and support their focus on student achievement. For example, they could compare all schools nationally or schools of similar type or student cohort. Current comparison focuses on achievement in previous years which supports lifting achievement. However, it does not help the school to readily identify variances at the standard level.

Recent changes made in the annual evaluations by subject, mean they now focus on both the contribution standards make towards student achievement and meeting the externally set targets. The school has found the subject reports now better inform their decision making. Adding an external benchmark at the standard level, will assist them with the identification of patterns of performance and outliers, along with providing evidence for the efficacy of initiatives and resourcing.

**For consideration**

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

- use an external benchmark when analysing subject achievement data by standard to help identify patterns of performance.

## 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))*

### **Vanguard Military School has effective processes and procedures for:**

- communicating assessment procedures to teachers, students and their families
- mentoring teachers new to the school so they understand and use NCEA procedures appropriately and consistently
- ensuring students have outlines for all courses they undertake
- reviewing communications regularly to ensure they are fit for purpose and current and reinforcing any changes with the respective audience.

### **Vanguard Military School assists common understanding of assessment practice by:**

- conducting quality assurance checks, which also confirm whether teachers and students are following processes
- informing teachers about assessment best practice and providing opportunities to discuss changes.

**Refinements to communications** Students confidently described the school's assessment processes and practices and value the clarity of expectations set. They are less self-assured in their knowledge of what was required to meet their qualifications goals. It is suggested that focussing on this from the start of the year should help build student understanding and confidence while providing them with a simple recording framework to track their own achievement could also help.

As part of their focus on enabling student success, the school currently pays NCEA fees, a quarter of which include financial assistance. The school is considering ways to further encourage all parents who are eligible to apply for this assistance.

### **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:

- increasing the support students already get for tracking their achievement to qualifications.