

Managing National Assessment Report

Ruru Specialist School

July 2018

What this report is about

This report summarises NZQA's review of how effectively Ruru Specialist 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 self-review
- *Ruru Specialist School NZQA Staff Handbook 2018*
- *Ruru Specialist School NZQA Student Handbook*
- *STAR and NZQA at our school* (parent/whānua flyer)
- school charter and relevant policies and procedures
- course information for the New Zealand Certificate in Skills for Living for Supported Learners.

The School Relationship Manager met with:

- the Principal's Nominee
- Deputy Principal
- three students
- Team Leader of the Supported Learning course
- Teacher of the Supported Learning course.

There was a report-back session with the Principal, Deputy 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.

Background

Ruru Specialist School provides education for students with high and complex needs from ages five to twenty-one years. Students are assessed in Unit and Achievement Standards if it is an appropriate learning outcome for the individual. Any students who undertake an assessment programme from the New Zealand Qualifications Framework (NZQF) are based in the schools Tertiary Education Centre which is off site at the Southern Institute of Technology campus.

In 2010, the school gained consent to assess standards from the NZQF. In 2011, the school commenced assessing standards and reporting results. This focused on a very limited number of Supported Learning standards. Some assessment was undertaken by the school, but most standards were assessed through the Southern Institute of Technology. The school has continued to develop its own assessment of Supported Learning standards and has extended its consent to assess to include some Hauora standards. It has also increased the range of outside providers it works with and the standards they offer to better meet the needs of its students.

NZQA has not previously undertaken a Managing National Assessment Review, but with the increase in assessment it is appropriate to commence reviews.

SUMMARY

Ruru Specialist School

27 July 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 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

Ruru Specialist School demonstrates the capacity to undertake review and evaluation of the effectiveness of their NZQA assessment practices and procedures. This leads to changes in assessment-related practice to better meet the needs of students.

Assessment processes are effectively managed to meet the individual needs of students. Assessment opportunities are extended by using external providers to offer courses and standards the school does not have the capacity to deliver. Both contribute towards assisting students to maximise their assessment outcomes.

Sound internal moderation processes, response to external moderation, monitoring by the Principal's Nominee and reviews by the senior management are embedded practice. These assure assessment quality and ensure that only credible results are reported to NZQA.

Data is managed effectively by the school with the timely and accurate reporting of results for students. NCEA data is used to help develop Individual Education Plans where appropriate, and to report on student achievement outcomes.

School communications allow staff, students and their families to gain a common understanding of NCEA and school assessment procedures.

Areas for improvement

Submitting special assessment conditions applications for students undertaking assessment through external providers would make it clear what conditions have been approved and ensure the students receive appropriate assistance.

Agreed action

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

- complete special assessment applications so that eligible students have access to the necessary support for all NCEA assessment.

Kay Wilson
Manager
School Quality Assurance and Liaison

28 September 2018

NZQA

0800 697 296

www.nzqa.govt.nz

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 previous Managing National Assessment Report There are no action items as the school has not been formally reviewed previously.

Response to external moderation outcomes Ruru Specialist School has effective processes for responding to external moderation. These ensure senior management is fully informed of all outcomes. The Principal's Nominee reads each report and shares them with the teaching staff. This year is the fourth year the school has submitted external moderation, while no issues have arisen the Principal's Nominee's process will support staff to resolve issues if they arise.

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)

The school's focus is on meeting individual student needs, and so all staff reflection concentrates on this. Senior managers meet with staff weekly and discuss how needs are being met and if processes are working. This feeds into monthly and annual reporting to the Principal and Board. Reports include results of assessments and external moderation, as well as progress and next steps with the annual and four-year plan.

The school regularly reviews the standards offered through external providers. This is in response to the vocational and academic pathways each individual student wishes to pursue, and in reaction to changes in the courses that outside providers offer.

Senior management reviews NZQA related policies biennially. The appointment of a new Principal's Nominee this year has led to a review of all documentation and processes. She has investigated with NZQA the reporting of results to ensure the process meets student need for timely processing of results and the fees charged.

The Principal has recently completed a sabbatical looking at post 21 opportunities for learners. From this, a future focus for the school is to investigate working more closely with a wider range of local employers to ensure assessment outcomes continue to best support their students' transition from school.

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)

Ruru Specialist School has effective processes and procedures for meeting the assessment needs of their students by:

- developing and modifying assessment programmes in response to Individual Education Plans, where realistic goals are set and monitored
- encouraging engagement using school certificates to recognise achievement in gaining individual standards
- developing assessment opportunities with external providers to reflect the range of student abilities and aspirations; supported learning, vocational and academic
- a planned transition from students completing the *National Certificate in Work and Community Skills (Supported Learning)* to the *New Zealand Certificate in Skills for Living for Supported Learners*
- gathering assessment evidence through a variety of styles including oral work and observation of practical tasks.

Ruru Specialist School has effective processes and procedures for:

- monitoring the authenticity of student work submitted during the assessment process, ensuring there is no over-guidance
- managing missed and late assessment, appeals and breaches of the assessment rules
- meeting the requirements of the Privacy Act 1993.

Submit special assessment conditions applications for students who need support To ensure students have access to the necessary assessment support when being assessed by external providers the school needs to submit special assessment conditions applications. This would make it clear what conditions have been approved by NZQA and the support the student requires for assessments. Existing documentation should be able to provide the evidence to support applications. The school should consider applying for all students who are assessed, so the approval is in place if there is a change in their assessment programme.

Assessments within the school are in a style that already caters to student's needs, such as non-time bound internals, non-written tasks and access for all students to appropriate writer or reader assistance.

Agreed action

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

- complete special assessment applications so eligible students have access to the necessary support for all NCEA assessment.

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)

Ruru Specialist School has effective processes and procedures for managing internal moderation by:

- ensuring all new or modified assessment materials are critiqued prior to use
- using subject specialists within the school to verify assessment judgements so they are consistent with the standard
- documenting the quality assurance process on an *Internal Moderation Cover Sheet*.

Ruru Specialist School has effective processes and procedures for managing external moderation by:

- ensuring student work is readily available for external moderation by being adequately stored and the Principal's Nominee knowing the location of the materials
- negotiating suitable changes to the moderation plan to gain feedback on the most appropriate standards
- selecting samples of student work for external moderation randomly to NZQA requirements.

Effective monitoring of internal moderation The school has an effective process for monitoring internal moderation. The Principal's Nominee's weekly meetings with the class teachers keep her up to date with how moderation is proceeding. She then signs off the *Internal Moderation Cover Sheet* once she has seen the moderation process is completed. A copy is stored with the physical work and a digital copy is saved centrally so that it is easily accessible by the teacher, Principal's Nominee and senior management.

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. Due to small class sizes, teachers chose to internally moderate all the student work for a standard.

Strategic selection has the potential to balance the professional development gained during the verification process with reducing 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.

No action required

No issues with the school's internal and external moderation were identified during this review.

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)

Ruru Specialist School effectively:

- **uses assessment-related data to support achievement outcomes for students by:**
 - using data to inform the development of Individual Education Plans and track student progress
 - ensuring students obtain sufficient credits to gain a qualification, where appropriate
- **reports accurate achievement data by:**
 - using a manual system agreed with NZQA to report results
 - reporting results to NZQA in a timely manner
 - holding current memoranda of understanding with external providers and reconciling them with entries.

Consider how to best support students with accessing the functions provided through their NZQA Learner login Students who register their NZQA Learner login have agency to order their New Zealand Record of Achievement and track the reporting of results to NZQA. The school provides students with individualised information about how to register their NZQA Learner login. Last year 50 percent of students with entries registered their Learner login. Working through the registration process and the functionality of the Learner login with students would help them improve their access.

Consider reviewing memoranda of understanding to ensure they are fit for purpose To manage any potential risk and protect all parties it is advisable to use the checklist produced by NZQA to ensure that memoranda give the school and an external provider a clear understanding of all of their respective responsibilities.

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:

- develop a process to better support student registration of their NZQA Learner login
- reviewing that memoranda of understanding are fit for purpose.

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))

Ruru Specialist School has effective processes and procedures for:

- ensuring students receive information on the courses they undertake
- communicating assessment policy and procedure to staff and students using a range of methods
- informing parents about NCEA assessment practice requirements through the Individual Education Plan consultation meetings
- invoicing families for fees for reporting results
- staff induction and exit.

Ruru Specialist School assists common understanding of assessment practice by:

- regularly discussing assessment practice with staff.

Minor changes required to staff and student information School publications should be reviewed to include information on the resubmission process for internal assessments and to ensure consistent references to the New Zealand Qualifications Framework.