

Managing National Assessment Report

School Assessment Systems

2010

Felix Donnelly College

Report on Managing National Assessment School Assessment Systems 2010

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The purpose of the Managing National Assessment (MNA) review is to help schools achieve valid, fair, accurate and consistent internal assessment. It is a partnership between schools and the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) and has two components:

- a visit to check and report on the school's assessment systems at least once every three years
- the annual external moderation of assessment materials and assessor decisions for a sample of internally assessed standards across all curriculum areas.

This report summarises the findings of the assessment check carried out by an NZQA School Relationship Manager (SRM) on 22 July 2010. The SRM met with the Acting Principal/Principal's Nominee (PN) to review progress since the last visit on 12 October 2006 and to appraise the school's assessment policies and procedures against the *Assessment and Examination Rules and Procedures for Secondary Schools*, the *Quality Assurance Standard for Accreditation of Secondary Schools* (QASS) and national practice.

The SRM also met with the teachers of Mathematics, Technology and Visual Arts to check that the school's policies and procedures are consistently and effectively applied. There was a report-back session with the Acting Principal at the end of the visit to highlight strengths and weaknesses, with suggested strategies for good practice.

This MNA report will be used in combination with the most recent Education Review Office Report in the reconfirmation of the school's accreditation.

Background

Felix Donnelly College provides education for a small number of students, mainly of secondary school age, who are under the care and protection of Child Youth and Family Services, and in the day-to-day care of the Youthlink Family Trust or the Youth Horizons Trust. Education is currently provided on three sites in South Auckland but was provided on six sites in 2009.

Students attend Felix Donnelly College until Child Youth and Family Services make other more permanent arrangements for their care and welfare. Typically, students spend between three and nine months at the school. The *Education Review Office Supplementary Review Report* (May 2009) identified that many of the students at the school have low levels of functional literacy and are effectively alienated from education.

In 2009, the school reported at least one result for 53 students. Results were reported for standards in English, Home and Life Science, Mathematics, Physical Education and Visual Arts. Each student has an individual education plan and the standards offered vary from student to student.

School Policies and Procedures

2006 Managing National Assessment Report (QASS 1.3v)

Evidence was sought that action items in the previous MNA report have been addressed.

The PN has considered each of the requirements and recommendations made in the 2006 report and the majority of these have been fully actioned. Further changes are required to the school's assessment documentation and practice for two of the action items.

Review of Policy and Procedures (QASS 1.2.6, 1.3v)

Evidence was sought that school-wide assessment policies and procedures have been reviewed and are in line with national practice.

The following documents were provided for this visit:

- *Felix Donnelly College, Procedures for Managing National Assessment* (handbook for staff)
- unit outlines and other relevant information intended for students from two of the departments visited.

The handbook has been recently reviewed by the PN. When next reviewed, guidelines for reporting Not Achieved, undertaking further assessment and offering students an opportunity to resubmit work should be included. As identified in 2006, and repeated again, it is required that the school include the standard registration number and version in course information and that it broaden its appeals procedure to apply to decisions relating to alleged breaches of assessment rules and to missed assessments.

The PN has a sound understanding of standards-based assessment and provides teachers with a high level of advice and guidance about assessment.

Assessment information is provided to students in unit outlines. The outlines sighted describe expected learning outcomes, list success criteria (statements that describe how the student will know they have achieved) and identify the standard that the teaching and learning is directed towards. Emphasis is placed on conveying information verbally to students because of their low level of functional literacy.

Opportunities to demonstrate achievement It is recommended that principles and practice around demonstrating achievement be documented in the staff handbook so that teachers can more confidently consider all evidence of achievement when drawing a final conclusion about student performance.

These principles include:

- Evidence of achievement may come from a range of tasks, and be accumulated over time.
- All evidence that is authentic and standard-specific should be taken into account by the teacher when drawing a final conclusion.
- Consideration should be given to ways to record or document evidence so that it can be verified by another teacher if required.
- Learners should not be assessed for a standard until the assessor is confident that achievement of the standard is within their reach, or until the final deadline for assessment, if there is one.

- The result of a student's best performance should be reported.
- Learning is not increased by repeated assessment, but by extensive feed forward and feedback.

Currently, in at least one subject, only evidence produced by students during formal in-class assessments is considered by the teacher when drawing a final conclusion.

It is suggested that a discussion about these principles be held in an appropriate forum. This is particularly relevant for teachers if the school intends to assess students for literacy or numeracy from 2011 using soon-to-be registered unit standards. Evidence of achievement for these standards is intended to be naturally occurring and not require use of a designated task or involve a one-off assessment event. Evidence could come from observation of day-to-day learning, be gathered over time and be assembled as a portfolio of evidence.

Quality Assurance Processes (QASS 1.2.6, 1.3v)

Evidence was sought that systems are in place to ensure that:

- *internal moderation is taking place*
- *departments are linking externally to maintain a current understanding of the national standard*
- *concerns raised by external moderation are dealt with*
- *there is analysis of and response to results data.*

Internal moderation The school has developed systems that effectively manage the school's operation on more than one site and that facilitate assessing students when they are ready, rather than assessing a group of students.

Aspects of the school's current procedures include:

- a bank of quality assured assessment materials held by the PN for some subjects
- professional engagement by teachers with external subject specialists, usually for the purpose of verifying student work
- verifying all student work rather than a sample
- storing student work from all sites at one location.

NZQA managed external moderation The most recent external moderation round for Felix Donnelly College was in November 2009 and involved the school submitting materials for four standards. Materials for each were deemed as being at the national standard and all assessor judgments were also confirmed as being at the national standard. Because a small number of students were assessed for each standard random selection of student work was not required.

Use of external providers Currently, the school does not engage external providers or assess against Industry Training Organisation standards.

Administration (QASS 1.2.5v-vii, 1.2.6, 1.2.7)

Evidence was sought of suitable systems and procedures for the management of assessment-related data.

Transferring students The temporary nature of the attending students is a key feature of the school. The school has developed good systems to ensure that, wherever possible, partially completed student work such as Visual Arts folios are forwarded to a student's new school. The school can be hampered in its ability to do so, however, if the school is not informed of the student's new school.

The school has adequate systems to ensure that results are forwarded to NZQA or to a student's new school.

Reporting Not Achieved results The school reports relatively few Not Achieved results.

A feature of the school's assessment philosophy is to assess students when they are ready. Individual education plans are developed for students when they arrive at the school and their preparedness to be assessed against standards is monitored by teachers and the PN. The school is aware of its obligation to report Not Achieved results if submitted work is evaluated as being below the level of Achieved or a student submits no work but has an adequate opportunity to do so.

Financial assistance Because of their circumstances, all students entered for national qualifications qualify for financial assistance. In conjunction with NZQA, the school has developed appropriate procedures to manage financial assistance for all students.

Attainment of qualifications Many students make a start towards attaining national qualifications during the time they are enrolled at Felix Donnelly College. None, however, are in a position to be able to complete the requirement for any national certificate by the time they leave the school.

Action Items

In order to comply with the *Assessment and Examination Rules and Procedures for Secondary Schools* and the *Quality Assurance Standard for Accreditation of Secondary Schools*, the school must:

- update the staff handbook so that it includes guidelines for reporting Not Achieved, undertaking further assessment and offering students an opportunity to resubmit work
- include the standard registration number and version in course information
- broaden its appeals procedure to apply to decisions relating to alleged breaches of assessment rules and to missed assessments
- include in the staff handbook principles and practice around demonstrating achievement and discuss these principles with teachers in an appropriate forum.

In line with good practice as seen nationally, the school should consider:

- holding a discussion about the school's approach to recognising achievement at a future QMS meeting or other appropriate forum.

Commendations

Felix Donnelly College is commended for the good practices that have been implemented over time and for its commitment to ongoing review to ensure quality assessment against standards on the New Zealand Qualifications Framework.

The school has developed assessment policies and procedures to suit the unique circumstance of the school; undertaking assessment at several sites, working individually with students, many of whom have low levels of functional literacy, and managing assessment for students who are temporarily at the school.

The Principal's Nominee is commended for her effort to provide students with a quality assessment environment. The school's quality assurance procedures are sufficiently robust to ensure that assessment is undertaken at the national standard and that results reported to NZQA are valid and based on authentic evidence.