

# **Managing National Assessment Report**

## **Northern Southland College**

**June 2017**

## What this report is about

This report summarises NZQA's review of how effectively Northern Southland 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 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, in combination with the most recent Education Review Office report 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 2017* (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
- *Northern Southland College National Qualifications Procedures* (Staff Handbook)
- *Northern Southland College Assessment Guidelines for Students* (Student Handbook)
- *Northern Southland College Board of Trustees Policies*
- a sample of course outlines for Years 11, 12 and 13.

The School Relationship Manager met with the Principal's Nominee, three students and Heads of Department for Digital Technology, English, Humanities and Science.

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

## Northern Southland College

22 June 2017

### 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

Northern Southland College has the capacity to effectively undertake its own review and evaluation of the effectiveness of a variety of NZQA-related assessment practices and procedures. Self-review has led to initiatives that help meet the needs of students and enhance assessment practices and communications.

Assessment processes are managed to meet the qualifications requirements of students. The school provides differentiated assessment through some individualisation of courses for identified students and gathering evidence in a variety of ways. Assessment opportunities are extended by using external providers to offer courses the school does not have the capacity to deliver. These contribute to assisting students to improve their qualification outcomes.

Internal moderation processes, action plans in response to external moderation, and monitoring by the Principal's Nominee assure assessment quality. This is reflected in the high level of the school's moderation agreement rate between teacher and NZQA external moderator judgements. The recording and sharing of outcomes fully informs senior management of any issues and the progress made with resolving them.

Data management and use effectively support student achievement outcomes. Assessment data is managed through checks to ensure results reported to NZQA are timely and accurate. Achievement data is analysed to review school courses, set strategic direction, monitor student progress to complete qualifications, and to identify and support students at risk of not achieving to their potential.

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

### Areas for improvement

Assessor judgements of student work must be verified each year for each standard assessed to ensure they are consistent with the standard. Subject teachers provide evidence to the Principal's Nominee for their selection of a sample for verification but staff need clarification of NZQA's expectation about what constitutes sufficiency when selecting a purposeful sample of student work.

Where assessment is carried out by an outside provider, a memorandum of understanding must always be in place before the assessment is undertaken. Without a contract between the school and the external provider a result cannot be reported. Not following this process may impact on a student's ability to have achievement recognised and be awarded a qualification. The school agreed to

ensure they have memoranda of understanding in place before assessment commences.

### **Agreed action**

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

- clarify what constitutes a purposefully selected sample of student work to ensure sufficiency for verification of assessor judgements
- ensure memoranda of understanding are in place before assessment commences.

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25 August 2017

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# FINDINGS OF THIS REVIEW

## How effectively has the school responded to external and internal review?

### External review

*Evidence found that external review actions have been appropriately and effectively addressed. (CAAS Guidelines 2.6iv, 3v)*

### Action Items from 24 and 25 July 2014 Managing National Assessment Report

The review did not find any significant issues but noted two identified actions to refine assessment practices. These have been addressed through strengthening the monitoring of internal moderation and following the same procedures for responding to Industry Training Organisations managed external moderation as with NZQA managed standards.

**Response to external moderation outcomes** The school has effective processes to respond to external moderation. The Principal's Nominee reads each moderation report and records the main points in an online tracking document. Reports are shared with Heads of Department who update benchmark exemplars and file the reports for future reference. If the report raises concerns, the Principal's Nominee discusses the issues with the Head of Department. An action plan is formed and recorded and the Principal's Nominee follows up on the completion of any necessary actions.

Assessor judgement agreement rates between teachers and external moderators have remained consistently high for the last five years with no departments having ongoing issues.

### 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)*

The school reviews its NCEA assessment practices to evaluate the effectiveness of current systems, in response to issues they have identified and to explore potential improvements. This is helping ensure credible assessment and utilising the flexibility of the NCEA model to meet the needs of students. Several assessment-related initiatives have been introduced to improve current practice and enhance student achievement.

**Assessment practice** To help ensure students are assessed when they are ready the school reviewed their processes on meeting assessment deadlines and granting extensions. Staff are now moving towards greater flexibility on managing submission dates which are considered taking into account each individual's needs and progress, where appropriate.

The differing processes around resubmissions for Industry Training Organisation (ITO) and NZQA administered standards was resulting in some inconsistent practice within departments. The school consulted with each ITO and used the NZQA *Mythbuster* publication in staff professional development sessions to highlight the different approaches and clarify school procedures. This resulted in staff and students having confidence in the way resubmissions are being used in each department.

Several departments have worked together to use a single context to assess standards in more than one curriculum area to allow time for students to gain a deeper understanding of a topic, emphasise real world links and improve engagement. This is continuing to be reviewed and adapted to meet current student need.

**Internal moderation processes** The school has reviewed if staff were following school processes, resulting in some processes being altered to better meet their intended purpose, and expectations reinforced with staff. Professional development sessions have been used to ensure staff understand the importance of completing moderation before submitting grades to NZQA. This has been aligned with the creation of an online approval process so results cannot be submitted until the Principal's Nominee has checked on the completion and recording of the moderation process on the *internal moderation cover sheet*.

**Data and communication** To improve the accuracy of internal and external entries and the consistency of information in course outlines, the Principal's Nominee has introduced an online system to check the content of course outlines and give approval before teachers can create entries in the student management system. The data manager uses the approved documents to check the accuracy of entries. This is being used as an interim step in a move towards developing a course outline template.

To help reduce the financial barrier of NZQA fees, the school is trialing an improvement to their process with financial assistance applications. The form will be sent to each caregiver to remove any concerns there may be around collecting a form from the school office.

The school has reviewed the frequency and timing of caregiver information sessions about NCEA. To improve engagement they are continuing with one during the October options afternoon, but have added in two others; one near the end of the year targeted towards families encountering NCEA for the first time the following year, and one part way through the year to give the opportunity to further clarify understanding.

**Internal self-review is a continual process** The schools self-review includes forward planning as well as responding to issues as they arise. Planned areas of future development include:

- developing staff understanding and capacity to assess naturally occurring evidence
- improving levels of certificate and course endorsement by developing a student culture that values Achievement with Merit as the base level of achievement
- investigating the impact of NCEA assessment in a senior wellbeing survey to provide information to manage student workload
- reviewing current student tracking processes to ensure they identify and support the intended "at risk" students
- instigating a formal end of year result check to further ensure the accuracy of reported results.

### **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 found that assessment practice is meeting student needs. (CAAS Guidelines 2.5v-vii, 2.6 I & ii and Assessment (including Examination) Rules for Schools with Consent to Assess 2017 5.5)*

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

- personalising NCEA entries where appropriate within courses
- extending assessment opportunities by using external providers to deliver:
  - courses the school is unable to offer
  - assessment against individual standards related to career pathways
- gathering evidence in a variety of ways
- offering several pathways, and tracking student progress, to gain literacy and numeracy requirements
- ensuring that students who need special assessment conditions are identified, appropriate applications completed, staff informed of student entitlements and suitable assistance readily available
- reviewing the courses offered in response to student and parent demand.

### **Northern Southland College has effective processes and procedures for:**

- monitoring the authenticity of student work
- managing missed and late assessment, appeals and breaches of the assessment rules
- providing valid resubmission and further assessment opportunities
- collecting credible evidence of student achievement for derived grade applications
- 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 found that internal and external moderation are ensuring assessment quality. (CAAS Guidelines 2.6iii & vi, and Assessment (including Examination) Rules for Schools with Consent to Assess 2017 6.4b)

### Northern Southland College 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 both within and outside the school to verify a purposefully selected sample of student work to ensure assessment judgements are consistent with the standard
- keeping benchmark exemplars and verification notes to inform future assessment decisions
- the Principal's Nominee closely monitoring and following up the completion of, and any issues arising from, the moderation process.

### Northern Southland College has effective processes and procedures for managing external moderation by:

- ensuring samples of student work are readily available for external moderation by being adequately stored and informing the Principal's Nominee where the materials are stored
- negotiating appropriate changes to the external moderation plan
- randomly selecting samples of student work for external moderation to meet current NZQA requirements
- having the same processes for both Industry Training Organisation and NZQA moderation.

**Monitoring completion of internal moderation** The school has an effective process for monitoring internal moderation, clearly recording the process and sharing the outcomes to inform self-review and apprise senior management.

The Principal's Nominee has created an online based system where staff submit *internal moderation cover sheets*. Results cannot be submitted to NZQA without her approving completion of the cover sheet. Any concerns have to be addressed before results are entered. The data manager will not send a results file to NZQA where standards with results in the student management system do not match those approved by the Principal's Nominee. Once results are entered, the *internal moderation cover sheet* is completed and checked so the Principal's Nominee knows that exemplars have been updated, materials appropriately modified, and where work is stored.

An annual physical check is carried out in departments by the Principal's Nominee to ensure practice matches the information recorded on the *internal moderation cover sheets*.

### Clarify sufficiency for work selected for verification of assessor judgements

The sample of purposefully selected work to give a teacher confidence that their judgements are consistent with the standard must include at least one piece of student work. Subject teachers indicate clearly on the *internal moderation cover sheet* their rationale for selecting their sample for verification and this is used to help

inform the Principal's Nominee about the effectiveness of their moderation process. The sample size has been zero when an assessor has recorded a very strong justification for their confidence in their grade judgement, so some assessed standards in some subject areas have not been verified every year. Staff need clarification of NZQA's expectation about what constitutes sufficiency when purposefully selecting sample of student work for verification.

### **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:

- clarify what constitutes a purposefully selected sample of student work to ensure sufficiency for verification of assessor judgements.

## How effectively does the school manage and make use of assessment-related data?

*Evidence found that data management and use supports student achievement outcomes. (CAAS Guidelines 2.6v, 2.7i-iii)*

### Northern Southland College effectively:

- **uses assessment-related data to support achievement outcomes for students by:**
  - monitoring students' progress towards NCEA achievement
  - providing monthly entry and result printouts from the NZQA website to students to track their own progress
  - analysing results comparatively and longitudinally to inform course design and set strategic direction.
- **reports accurate achievement data by:**
  - reporting results to NZQA on a timely and regular basis
  - checking the school's consent to assess before adding new standards to a course
  - using the NZQA Key Indicators to identify and resolve any data errors
  - having repeated teacher checks to ensure entries and reported results are accurate
  - encouraging students to check entries and results in both the student management system and through their NZQA Learner login
  - reporting Not Achieved results, as appropriate.

**Ensure memoranda of understanding are in place before assessment is undertaken** The school does not have current memoranda of understanding for assessment undertaken by some outside providers this year. Students cannot be assessed or results reported if memoranda are not in place, so there is a risk that students may not be awarded the credits for standards where they have completed an assessment. The school agreed to ensure memoranda of understanding are in place before assessment is undertaken to safeguard the validity of any results achieved through an outsider provider.

### 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 memoranda of understanding are in place before assessment commences.

## **How effectively does the school's communication inform staff, and students and their families about assessment?**

*Evidence found that school communication ensures understanding about assessment. (CAAS Guidelines 2.4i(f), 2.4v, 2.6vii, 2.7iib)*

### **Northern Southland College has effective processes and procedures for:**

- ensuring students receive outlines for all courses they undertake
- communicating assessment policy and procedures to staff, students and their families using a range of methods
- publicising information on NZQA fees and financial assistance.

### **Northern Southland College assists common understanding of assessment practice by:**

- annually briefing students in several tailored year level meetings about assessment policy and procedures
- presenting to parents NZQA and school assessment related processes
- requiring students and parents to sign that they have read and understood the student handbook before the school will submit results to NZQA
- the Principal's Nominee approving the content of course outlines before they are distributed to students.

**Review the language and layout of the student handbook** The student handbook covers the school's NCEA practice, though some sections are identical to the staff handbook and reviewing the language and layout may make it more user friendly for students.

### **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 student handbook to ensure the language and layout is appropriate to the audience.