

Managing National Assessment Report

2013

James Cook High School

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Introduction

The purpose of the Managing National Assessment (MNA) external review is:

- to help schools achieve valid, fair, accurate and consistent internal assessment according to the requirements of the *Assessment and Examination Rules for Schools with Consent to Assess 2013* (Assessment Rules); and
- in combination with the most recent Education Review Office report, to ensure that schools are meeting the requirements of the *Consent to Assess Against Standards on the Directory of Assessment Standards Rules 2011* and its *Guidelines* (CAAS Guidelines) in order to maintain their consent to assess.

This process is a partnership between schools and the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) to ensure that assessment systems remain effective and internal assessment decisions are valid.

The MNA review has two components:

1. The annual external moderation of assessment materials for an NZQA-selected sample of internally assessed standards across the curriculum and teacher grade judgements on the student work identified by the school's random-selection process.
2. An external review of each school's assessment systems at least once every four years.

This report summarises NZQA's evaluation of how effectively:

- senior management has addressed issues identified during the previous MNA review on 25 August 2011
- the school manages assessment for national qualifications
- the school manages internal and external moderation
- the school manages and makes use of assessment-related data
- the school maintains the currency of assessment policy and procedures, and communicates them to staff, students and families.

In preparing this report, the School Relationship Manager (SRM) met with the Principal's Nominee, the Faculty Managers for English and Mathematics and the teachers in charge of History and Music. The school also provided the SRM with comprehensive pre-review information and the staff and student assessment procedures guides.

There was a report-back session with the Principal and Principal's Nominee at the end of the visit to highlight strengths and weaknesses, with suggested strategies for good practice and to agree on recommended actions.

2011 Managing National Assessment Report (CAAS Guidelines 3v)

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

The majority of the action items in the 2011 MNA report have been fully addressed by the school but only in time to take effect for 2013. The school is encouraged to make an immediate response to some of the action items in this report as well as ensuring that all changes are in place for 2014.

Assessment Practice (CAAS Guidelines 2.5v-vii, 2.6, 3v)

How does the school's assessment practice allow for the effective management of assessment for national qualifications?

Managing student entries Achievement data for the school's student population shows that the majority of its annual Year 9 intake is working up to four years below the expected curriculum level for literacy, numeracy and writing. The school strives to close these gaps but skills deficits in these areas are still apparent by the time students enter Year 11.

National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) data shows that the majority of Year 11 students fall short of attaining 80 credits in a single year and, as a result, they are not awarded NCEA Level 1 in Year 11. A majority of these students, however, achieve the qualification the following year. This pattern is repeated in the results of Year 12 students, many of whom achieve NCEA Level 2 when they are in Year 13.

An analysis of the school's Year 11 NCEA entry and results data for 2012 shows that most students were entered for more standards than they were realistically capable of achieving. Data for some courses reveals relatively uniform pattern of entries among students taking the same course and the reporting of Not Achieved for a high proportion of grades. Consequently, the overwhelming majority of students become participants for the qualification (because they are entered in a sufficient number of credits to potentially gain an NCEA) but relatively few students achieve the qualification in a single year.

The school is endeavouring to differentiate its entries so they reflect student ability and reflect that some students require more time to master the skills and understanding required for one standard before progressing to another. The school reported that achieving this will require a change of attitude on the part of some teachers.

Some teachers, however, already embrace this. One HOD interviewed during the review described how their courses offer a core of standards that assess skills or understanding that they deem to be essential for students to successfully study the subject at a higher level. Students select other standard from a menu that reflects their ability, attendance pattern, interests and future aspirations. Another HOD reported that they differentiate NCEA entries by entering some students in selected externally assessed standard or in additional internally assessed standards.

The school reports that its Health Academy and Services Academy is effective in meeting the needs of participating students because of the way these courses focus on a tailored menu of subjects and standards. The same is true for the school's teen

parent unit where assessment is undertaken by the school in partnership with Te Aho o Te Kura Pounamu -The Correspondence School (Te Kura).

Reporting Not Achieved In combination with taking steps to effectively manage the way students are entered for standards, the school should also review its understanding and practice of what constitutes an adequate assessment opportunity. If students are entered for standards that they are not capable of achieving because they do not yet access the curriculum at the appropriate level of assessment, an assessment opportunity should not be deemed as being fair or adequate. Accordingly, teachers should withdraw an entry rather than report Not Achieved. The school has undertaken to review this with teachers to ensure Not Achieved is reported only when students have had a fair assessment opportunity.

Literacy and numeracy In 2012, the school offered the Work and Study Skills unit standards to the majority of students in Year 11. This was appropriate given that these standards are intended for use with students who are at risk of not meeting the NCEA numeracy or literacy requirements from achievement standards.

Evidence for the Work and Study Skills literacy standards is not exclusively crafted in English classes. The school reported that teachers from a range of subjects are working more collaboratively and evidence from these subjects and from cultural or sporting settings contribute to students' literacy portfolios.

In 2012, the majority of evidence for the Work and Study Skills numeracy standards was crafted in students' Mathematic classes. The department is exploring ways to gather evidence for these standards from a greater range of courses and settings.

Special assessment conditions The school makes relatively few applications for special assessment conditions (SAC) for students.

Many of the students with an identified learning disability also do not yet access the curriculum at the appropriate level of assessment.

Authenticity Teachers use a range of strategies to ensure students submit authentic work for assessment. In addition to being given reminders in class, students may sign an assessment coversheet to attest that their work is their own, or be required to submit drafts of their completed work.

The school reported that it successfully followed its Breach of the Rules procedure in 2013 to investigate a situation where a student submitted work that was not their own. Not Achieved was reported for the standard and this action is consistent with the Assessment Rules.

Derived grades The school's preliminary examinations are held at the end of Term three. Teachers reported that their assessments are from commercial sources and that evidence for derived grades come from these examinations or from end of class tests. This is consistent with the Assessment Rules.

For 2013, the PN intends to hold the school's preliminary examinations under the same conditions and settings as those that are provided for students at the end of the year in their national examinations.

Further assessment Teachers who were interviewed during the review described practice involving further assessment that was consistent with the Assessment Rules. Statements about further assessment in the course handbooks submitted for the

review were, however, not consistent with the Assessment Rules. One indicated that students could have up to three resit opportunities and another indicated that reassessment was available only to students who gained Not Achieved on their first submitted work. It is recommended that the school review its further assessment procedure with all staff so that, where necessary, they can align their practice with the Assessment Rules rather than to statements in current course handbooks.

Identified actions

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

- continue to work with teacher to ensure they enter students in appropriate standards
- ensure Not Achieved is reported only when students have had a fair assessment opportunity
- review its further assessment procedure with staff, and update course handbooks so that where necessary, they can align their practice with the Assessment Rules.

Moderation (CAAS Guidelines 2.6, 3v)

How effectively does school internal and external moderation assure assessment quality?

Internal moderation processes Each teacher interviewed understood that internal moderation is intended to ensure that results reported by the school for internally assessed standards are at the national standard. They are required to critique assessment materials before they are used to assess students and to verify a sample of marked student work against the standard in question. The school requires the use of an *Internal Moderation Cover Sheet* for each standard so that there is a record of it having been completed, including the names of the critiquer, verifier and the students whose work was check-marked. The cover sheet is retained in departments with other assessment materials.

Evidence sighted for two subjects showed that internal moderation is robustly undertaken for every standard. For one of these, six samples of student work are routinely verified from every class by one or more of three designated teachers. The department's modified cover sheet enables the verifier to provide the maker with detailed feedback about why they agree with the teacher's judgement or justify why they have changed the grade provisionally awarded by the teacher. The verifier's grade becomes the highest grade that can be awarded for the piece of work in question.

In the second department, the subject leader has a strong professional relationship with colleagues in other schools and they meet in person to review and verify a sample of work completed by her students. The teachers reported that the ensuing discussions have been effective in helping her to develop and understanding of national standards for her subject.

For a third subject, internal moderation was not robustly undertaken for all standards in 2012, but practice has improved in 2013 and the Faculty Manager is maintaining greater oversight of it and monitoring the progress of standards through each step of

the process.

For the fourth subject reviewed, the effectiveness of internal moderation can be improved by the teacher engaging with a verifier who has more recent and relevant experience with the standards being offered.

The PN is aware of one other subject where the verification of a sample of marked student work must be undertaken more effectively. The PN is working with the teacher concerned and, in the interim, has assumed control of the electronic mark book and the ability of the teacher to report provisional student grades to NZQA.

All of the departments reviewed adequately store completed student work so that it is secure and easily located should it be required the following year for external moderation.

Monitoring internal moderation Faculty Managers are expected to oversee and monitor internal moderation in each of the subject areas that are part of the Faculty. It is recommended that the school reiterate this with Faculty Managers and have them reflect on ways that they can disseminate good practice across subjects for which they have responsibility.

For 2013, the PN has added an assurance attestation as a final check in the school's internal moderation process. Faculty Managers will provide written confirmation to the PN near the end of the year that the school's internal moderation procedure has been completed for each of the internally assessed standards for which results are reported. This will enable the school to annually comply with Assessment Rule 5.6.b by only reporting results that have been subject to the school's internal moderation procedure.

Understanding of national standards Teachers engage with colleagues in other schools to maintain their understanding of national standards and to verify a sample of marked student work. As a next step, the school should encourage teachers to periodically engage colleagues in other schools to verify a sample of marked student work irrespective of whether there are other suitably experienced subject teachers at the school. This will help ensure that assessor judgments are in line with the national standard and that teachers are not marking to their own 'local standard' or interpreting standards in their own way.

External moderation The school's most recent external moderation round was in July 2013. Fifty-four standards were selected by NZQA across almost the full range of subjects that the school offers.

The PN oversees the process by which samples of student work are randomly selected for external moderation. The selection method ensures teachers cannot predict which pieces of work will be called for and the process meets NZQA requirements.

Moderation reports indicate that the overwhelming majority of tasks used to assess students are at the national standard and that, in most subjects, teachers are awarding grades in line with national standards.

The PN addresses matters raised in external reports with the relevant Faculty Manager or subject teachers and she requires a written response about how they propose to remedy the issues raised by external moderators. The *Response to External Moderation* reports for 2012 were tabled as evidence of this process being

undertaken. Some of the actions proposed or undertaken by subject leaders in 2012 confirmed for the PN that subjects with poor external moderation had undertaken internal moderation ineffectively or inconsistently.

The PN intends to more thoroughly review the actions proposed in *Response to External Moderation* reports for 2013 and ensure that the planned actions are sufficient to be able to effectively address issues identified by external moderators.

Risk, response and review Steps already taken or in progress for 2013 demonstrate that the school has developed a greater capacity to identify assessment practice that presents a risk to students, the school and NZQA, and to make an appropriate response to the risk.

Identified 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:

- encourage teachers to periodically engage colleagues in other schools to verify a sample of marked student work irrespective of whether there are other suitably experienced subject teachers at the school.

Data (CAAS Guidelines 2.6, 2.7)

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

Accuracy of assessment-related data The school regularly submits data files to NZQA during the year and the PN follows up on alerts or warning messages that are signalled back to the school once each file is processed.

In 2012, the majority of student entries in externally assessed standards were made by published deadlines. The school made a small number of late entries, along with the related request to NZQA for examination materials. The school is aware that, for one subject, the check made of external entries prior to 1 September needs to be undertaken more carefully.

The school did not provide a result for 21 per cent of entries it made for internally assessed standards in 2012. As stated previously, it is recommended that the school amend the guidelines given to teachers so that a decision to report Not Achieved is made in conjunction with consideration about whether students have had a fair assessment opportunity.

Students are encouraged to use their NZQA Learner login to check that their results are accurate and complete. In 2012, however, only 58 per cent of students registered for Learner login although 85 per cent of those who registered used the facility at least once during the year to access their results. The school has developed a parent portal so that parents can assess results for their student.

Use of assessment-related data Annually, Faculty Managers write a detailed report and analysis of NCEA achievement data for the Principal. A follow-up interview is held between the Faculty Manager and a Deputy Principal and an action plan is developed from this discussion.

The recent analysis of data has led to the introduction of new courses, including Young Enterprise, employment skills and automotive engineering. The analysis has also identified that changes are required to the school's capacity to deliver some subjects so students can access their subjects of choice.

Privacy and password security The school has engaged with the Education Sector Authentication and Authorisation (ESAA) process so that teachers have on-going access to the range of NZQA generated data and statistical reports that are available through the school's NZQA website login. The PN is responsible for maintaining the list of teachers with ESAA access to school data.

Identified action

No action was identified as needed to improve the management and use of assessment-related data.

Communication (CAAS Guidelines 2.4i, 2.6, 3v)

How effectively does the school maintain the currency of assessment policy and procedures, and communicate them to staff, students and families?

Policies and procedures to staff and students The following documents were provided for this visit:

- *James Cook High School Charter*
- *James Cook High School Assessment Policy, 2013*
- *Student Information leaflet for NCEA, 2013*
- a *Course Handbook* for 2013 for a range of courses.

The PN maintains the currency of the school's assessment documents and the handbooks for students and teachers were updated for 2013.

Course handbooks Those sighted for the review provide students with information about school-wide procedures such as how to appeal an assessment decision or what the consequences are for a breach of the rules. It is recommended that the school consider removing this information from subject handbooks and including it in the student information leaflet.

The school should also ensure that each course handbook includes an assessment statement formatted to a template intended for use throughout the school. In addition to indicating the standards being offered in the course, the template should include standard-specific information about the literacy and/or numeracy status of each standard and the availability of further assessment, including resubmission, so that students know whether there will be any subsequent opportunity to improve their initial grade.

Financial assistance The school actively promotes the availability of financial assistance for students entered for standards by providing information about eligibility, due dates and an application form to the families of all senior students. Reminders are included in school newsletters.

Engagement with staff The school has a designated time for staff professional development each week. The PN has effectively used this forum to review some of the school procedures, including its expectations for the way internal moderation is

undertaken, complying with external moderation requirements and reporting Not Achieved.

Engagement with whanau/families Home School partnership interviews with parents and students are a new initiative for 2013 and have proved to be a more effective way for the school to engage with whanau/families. The first meeting was attended by whanau/families for 54 per cent of students and the meeting included information about NCEA and advice about subject and career planning.

Engagement with students Academic mentoring is also a new initiative for 2013 and involves every teacher in the school meeting periodically with a small number of Years 11- 13 students. This forum is proving to be an effective way for the assigned teacher to gain a bigger picture of students' academic progress. Some teachers have already identified that a student's best interest is served by reducing the number of standards they are entered for.

Identified actions

NZQA and senior management agree on the following actions to maintain the currency of assessment policy and procedures, and communicate them to staff, students and families. Senior management undertakes to:

- consider removing information about school-wide assessment procedures from subject handbooks and include it in the student information leaflet
- ensure there is an assessment statement for each course formatted to a template intended for use throughout the school.

Summary

James Cook High School has implemented, or is implementing, a range of strategies to strengthen its procedures for assessment for national qualifications and deliver better assessment outcomes for students.

The school is aware that students' NCEA entries must be better managed to ensure students are not entered in standards that they are not capable of achieving because they do not yet access the curriculum at the appropriate level of assessment. This will lead to positive flow on effect for the school in the form of it making fewer entries for which no result is reported, reporting fewer Not Achieved grades, an improved ability to accurately monitor students' progress towards attaining national qualifications and undertaking Home School partnerships and academic mentoring using realistic entry and achievement data.

Internal moderation is undertaken to a high standard in some subjects. It can be undertaken more effectively in some subjects by the teacher engaging with a suitably experienced colleague for the purpose of verifying a sample of marked student work. For some Faculties, managers must monitor internal moderation more closely and also look to extend good practice across all subjects that are part of the Faculty.

The Principal's Nominee effectively manages external moderation and has identified that, in some cases, poor external moderation results are indicative of internal moderation being undertaken ineffectively or inconsistently.

The school has effective processes to ensure assessment-related data reported to NZQA is accurate and complete. The school's analysis of its data feeds into its review of the range courses it offers to students.

In 2013, the school has introduced initiatives to more effectively engage with whanau/families (Home School partnerships), students (academic mentoring) and teachers (regular professional development).

The Principal's Nominee ably leads the staff and she has the full support of the Principal.

The 2013 Managing National Assessment review identified no significant issues that prevent the school from meeting the requirements of the *Consent to Assess Against Standards on the Directory of Assessment Standards Rules 2011* and its *Guidelines*.

Based on the outcome of this assessment systems check, it is anticipated that the next Managing National Assessment review will be conducted within three years.