

MANAGING NATIONAL ASSESSMENT REPORT

**James Cook
High School**

May 2016

Managing National Assessment Review

The purpose of reviewing the management of national assessment is:

- 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 2016* (Assessment Rules); and
- 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.

The review has three components:

- The annual external moderation of assessment materials and of teacher grade judgements for student work selected by the school's random-selection process.
- A random sampling of aspects of assessment systems and data for review or audit on an annual basis.
- A visit to review each school's assessment systems at least once every four years.

Managing National Assessment Report

This report summarises NZQA's evaluation of how effectively the school:

- has addressed issues identified through the three components of 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
- manages and makes use of assessment-related data
- maintains the currency of assessment policy and procedures, and communicates them to staff, students and families.

In preparing this report, the School Relationship Manager and NZQA's Chief Advisor Pasifika met with the Principal's Nominee and Heads of Learning Areas or teachers in charge of Business, Languages, Mathematics, Music, Physical Education and Health, Services Academy, and three students.

The school also provided pre-review information and the following documents:

- *James Cook Assessment Policy 2016* for teachers
- *James Cook High School Guiding Principles and Student Charter*
- *NCEA Music Level 3 Course Handbook*.

There was a report-back session with the Principal, Associate Principal and Principal's Nominee at the end of the review visit to highlight good practice and areas for improvement, with suggested strategies and next steps and to agree on any action required.

OVERVIEW

James Cook High School

19 May 2016

James Cook High School aspires to raise student achievement levels by developing a culture of trust and respect, through increased accountability of all. Ensuring that the school has systems in place where everyone takes accountability for the assessment needs of the students will help them achieve this.

Significant issues

This review identified significant issues that would prevent James Cook High School from meeting the requirements of the *Consent to Assess Against Standards on the Directory of Assessment Standards Rules 2011*.

These issues are:

- an absence of information to students on NCEA qualifications or assessment programmes meaning they are not empowered
- students not being able to rely on NZQA data to accurately show their achievement progress because the school's reporting of entries and results is not always accurate or timely
- that a significant proportion of students are being assessed against an insufficient number of standards to allow them to achieve qualifications
- the concept of an adequate assessment opportunity is not followed by all meaning 'Not Achieved' results are not consistently reported by the school
- a need for consistent assessment practice that is fair and appropriate
- the lack of appropriate response to agreed action items in the previous MNA review.

Areas for improvement

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

- monitoring completion of actions planned in response to the outcomes of external moderation to ensure assessment quality
- ensuring the verification process involves sufficient, purposeful selection of student work at grade boundaries to provide confidence that teacher judgements are consistent with the standard
- reviewing the process for monitoring internal moderation to better assure assessment quality and inform self-review
- review of how the Principal's Nominee role is carried out with a view to sharing the load so that all aspects are resourced and can be effectively managed.

Improvements made

The provision of teacher development time to focus on developing culturally sensitive pedagogies is a school initiative that is having a positive impact on assessment practices. As teacher confidence in their professional practice increases, they are becoming more flexible in their provision of credible assessment opportunities to better meet the needs of students.

The introduction of a six monthly report to senior managers analysing student success by standard has impacted positively on achievement. This is helping teachers to better identify what assessment is working well, allowing them to adjust their course design to better meet student needs.

Next Steps

Required action

In order to maintain its consent to assess, the school must:

- adequately address Action Items from the previous MNA review (CAAS Guidelines 3v)
- provide adequate and appropriate information about assessment processes to students (CAAS Guidelines 2.4i)
- transfer student achievement data to NZQA accurately, on a regular and timely basis (CAAS Guidelines 2.7iii).
- ensure that students are provided with an adequate assessment opportunity, and report Not Achieved results appropriately.

Action agreed to improve practice In addition to the action required to maintain consent, NZQA and senior management agrees on the following action to align with best assessment practice. Senior management undertakes to:

- monitor responses to the outcomes of external moderation to ensure assessment quality
- ensure that the verification process involves sufficient, purposeful selection of student work at grade boundaries to provide confidence that teacher judgements are consistent with the standard
- review the internal moderation monitoring process to better assure assessment quality and inform self-review.

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

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FINDINGS OF THIS REVIEW

Response to External and Internal Reviews

Previous external reviews

Evidence was sought that external review recommendations and findings have been appropriately and effectively addressed. (CAAS Guidelines 3v)

Action Items from the 16 August 2103 MNA Report

The 2013 report noted a number of assessment practice, internal moderation, and communication issues that the school undertook to address. These were to:

- continue to work with teachers to ensure they enter students in appropriate standards
- ensure Not Achieved is reported only when students have had a fair assessment opportunity
- ensure that the further assessment procedure align with NZQA's assessment rules and update course hand books where necessary
- encourage teachers to periodically engage colleagues in other schools to verify a sample of marked work irrespective of whether there are other suitably experienced subject teachers at the school
- consider removing information about school-wide procedures from subject hand books 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.

The school must ensure that they effectively respond to external review findings. In changing their practices to address the first two items above, the school is no longer compliant with NZQA's rules for the reporting of a Not Achieved result where a student has had an adequate assessment opportunity. This significant issue is discussed in the assessment practice and data sections of this report.

Action on the other four items has not been undertaken. Three of them have now become requirements as detailed in the relevant sections of this report.

External moderation follow-up needs to be more timely and reflective

As noted in the 2013 MNA report, the system for checking on responses to external moderation findings needs review. The follow up process should include an evidence based check that planned changes in response to external moderation feedback have been actioned before the standard is next assessed.

Where a moderator notes concerns in an external moderation report, the school requires Heads of Learning Areas to provide a written response. In some instances professional development is organised and the Principal advised. The Principal's Nominee uses the external moderation results for the next year as evidence that an affected learning area has responded effectively. This evidence is provided too late in the assessment process to assure quality.

James Cook High School's external moderation history shows that internal moderation practices are steadily improving the quality of teacher judgments. Another next step is for the school to use their external moderation results to reflect on the quality of internal moderation practices. For example, where external

moderation feedback indicates that teacher judgements are not nationally consistent, the school should review the verification process to identify whether the verifier commented on the issue.

Internal review

Evidence was sought that the school was 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)

Since the last MNA visit, school self-review has resulted in a number of changes that impact on assessment for qualifications. These illustrate the school's growing capacity for self-review of assessment and include:

- providing weekly professional development opportunities for teachers to develop culturally responsive practices that better meet the needs of the student population
- reviewing checking procedures for internal moderation to reduce the inefficiency of paper memos and physical visits
- having Heads of Learning Areas manage and analyse their own data to increase ownership and awareness of what is happening in every class
- responding to feedback from families that they want to meet with subject teachers to discuss their child's progress and achievement.

One Learning Area Head with current responsibility for an additional learning area has developed an attestation document to remind teachers of expectations and help keep them on track. This could provide a starting point for the school to consider when extending processes for regular review of assessment practice.

Required action

In order to maintain its consent to assess the school must:

- adequately address Action Items from the previous MNA review (CAAS Guidelines 3v)

Agreed action

NZQA and senior management agree on the following action to further refine assessment practices. Senior management undertakes to:

- monitor responses to the outcomes of external moderation to ensure assessment quality.

Assessment Practice

How does the school's assessment practice allow for the effective management of assessment for national qualifications? (CAAS Guidelines 2.5v-vii, 2.6, 3)

James Cook High School's development of assessment practice has focussed on:

- developing teacher understanding and use of culturally sensitive pedagogy to cater for student need
- challenging teacher practice to better use the flexibility of the qualifications framework in providing assessment opportunities and to gather evidence across a range of contexts and subjects.

Examples of best assessment practice include teachers:

- providing opportunities for students to achieve at the level of their ability by including all three NCEA levels within the one assessment in English
- collecting naturally occurring evidence outside the classroom towards achievement of standards in Music
- having students experience success by using standards they are successful in for assessment early in the year
- using the first assessment of the year as a diagnostic to determine the composition of standards within a course for the remainder of the year.

Adequate assessment opportunity needs clarification In order to better meet the achievement needs of the students, the school needs to develop a shared understanding of what constitutes an adequate assessment opportunity.

The Principal's Nominee noted that currently the concept of an adequate opportunity was not well understood or consistently followed by some teachers. Therefore, where teachers report Not Achieved results, she withdraws the result from teacher mark books. Her intent is to have teachers consider whether the student had a fair opportunity to participate in the assessment. However as she does not identify that the student was a genuine participant, the school is also withdrawing Not Achieved results where the student participated in the assessments.

A more valid approach would be for the school to agree a policy on what constitutes an adequate assessment opportunity, then help teachers to understand and follow it in terms of entries and withdrawals. Any policy should take into account the high level of absenteeism identified by teachers as a current barrier to student participation in assessment.

Assessing when students are ready would reduce the need for the school to provide additional assessment opportunities. The school provides students with further assessment opportunities at the end of the year where extra credits are needed to complete and NCEA. One subject area also offers an additional catch up mid-year and after school tutorials with food provided to encourage student participation. Providing a more flexible assessment opportunities would reduce the need for this extra effort by both teachers and students.

Differentiating assessment for students will better meet their needs The 2013 MNA noted that the school was endeavouring to differentiate its entries to better reflect student ability. While the Principal's Nominee and teachers said that they are now providing some individualised assessment opportunities, the experience of the students interviewed is that they are still assessed as a class. The students stated that their preference is to move at their own pace, neither slowed down or rushed by the progress of other students. Differentiating assessment to better meet student ability and need would represent sound assessment practice.

Required action

The following action is required to improve the management of assessment for national qualifications. The school must:

- ensure that students are provided with an adequate assessment opportunity, and report Not Achieved results appropriately.

Moderation

How effectively does school internal and external moderation assure assessment quality? (CAAS Guidelines 2.6, 3)

James Cook High School has effective processes and procedures for managing internal and external moderation by:

- requiring teachers to critique assessment tasks and schedules before use
- using a cover sheet to record the moderation process
- meeting NZQA requirements for the random selection of student work for external moderation.

All teachers provided evidence of internal moderation, including the use of subject specialists to verify teacher judgments for samples of student work. Single teacher departments use subject experts external to the school for verification which is good practice.

Verification sample needs clarification Verification should focus on those pieces of student work where the teacher is not confident in their judgement. Checking a sufficient, purposeful selection of student work at grade boundaries provides assurance that teacher judgements are consistent with the standard. Some teachers described this as their practice.

However, most teachers select a set number of pieces of student work to be verified thinking they are complying with NZQA requirements. Some carry out this selected sample check in addition to their informal checks where they seek a second opinion on grade boundaries. The added workload of the compliance check does not necessarily add value for teachers or students. Clarifying the purpose and practice of verification with teachers will ensure they direct their efforts to purposeful selection for the greatest value.

Monitoring records now stored digitally School review of the internal moderation monitoring process has resulted in the adoption of a digital process for storing records. This increases the transparency of the process and helps ensure results are not sent to NZQA before internal moderation is complete.

Heads of Learning Areas now place a completed *Internal Moderation Cover Sheet* in the shared digital folder. The Principal's Nominee checks the cover sheet once results for a standard appear in the student management system, then sends the results to NZQA. She plans to include responses to external moderation and any attestation documents in this shared folder. This will centralise this key information and make it more visible.

Monitoring process needs strengthening Quality assurance monitoring processes should reliably identify areas of strength and need for improvement. The Principal's Nominee describes James Cook High School's quality assurance process as being based on a high trust model.

In following up issues identified from internal moderation cover sheets, the Principal's Nominee carries out checks on physical evidence in Learning Areas. In 2015 for example, she reported checking six areas. The findings of these checks should be documented so that there is a record of the outcomes.

The number of checks carried out is insufficient for the school to be confident that they are comprehensive enough to identify emerging areas of concern. In 2015, the practice of Heads of Learning Areas providing the Principal's Nominee with an end of year attestation of compliance with internal moderation was discontinued.

For some learning areas therefore, the check that an internal moderation process is adequately assuring assessment quality is based solely on the Principal's Nominees review of cover sheets in the digital file. Re-introducing an annual attestation and extending the evidence based checks will provide a useful reminder to Heads of Learning Areas about expectations, the opportunity to affirm good assessment practice, identify trends, and inform self-review.

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 that the verification process involves sufficient, purposeful selection of student work at grade boundaries to provide confidence that teacher judgements are consistent with the standard
- review the internal moderation monitoring process to better assure assessment quality and inform self-review.

Data Quality and Use

How effectively does the school manage and make use of assessment-related data?
(CAAS Guidelines 2.6, 2.7, 3)

James Cook High School effectively:

- manages assessment-related data by:
 - providing students with access to their result data through their tutors or the student management system portal
- makes use of assessment-related data to:
 - provide learning area milestone reports to Senior Management on achievement success by standard and course
 - critically reflect on assessment practice in learning areas.

School achievement data unreliable Students cannot rely on NZQA data to accurately reflect achievement at James Cook High School because the reporting of entries and results is not always accurate or timely.

A majority of students are being assessed in an insufficient number of standards to allow them to achieve qualifications. In 2013, the MNA identified that students had too many entries with no result reported against them, or where the result reported was 'Not Achieved'. The subsequent changes made by the school have resulted in an increase in achievement for those students participating in qualifications. However, it has also led to an increase to 50% or above in the number of students no longer participating in assessment for qualifications for all three NCEA levels.

The school must ensure that entry and result data used to award qualifications accurately shows assessment undertaken by students. In 2015, 4.9% of the grades awarded to students for internally assessed standards were not achieved, compared with the national rate of 21.6% for schools in the same decile band. This is a consequence of the lack of shared understanding of what constitutes an adequate assessment opportunity. Once this understanding is gained, the school will then be in the position to provide clear guidance to teachers about student entry and withdrawal to show genuine participation in assessment against standards.

Data improvement will aid tracking of student achievement Data entry processes can be improved to provide students and teachers with quality information about intended assessment programmes and increased student success in qualifications.

The school does not require teachers enter students in a standard with NZQA before results are reported. An entry indicates an intent to assess a student and when all entries are combined, provides a picture of the planned achievement pathway for the student. Once a pathway is mapped, it is easier for the everyone to track and review the impact of absence or incomplete assessments on achievement outcomes.

Students and families rely on the school's records in tracking progress towards achieving qualifications. While students described having at least one person in the school they felt they could ask to find out about their results and progress, they recognise that qualifications are awarded based on their NZQA record, and so want this to be accurate and complete.

Data checks and timeliness of reporting needs improvement The checks on data quality expected by the school are not currently practised. The effect of this is that students report grades provided to NZQA are not always accurate. Nor is reporting to NZQA timely. This means students have missing results and incomplete qualifications. Requiring timely reporting of results to NZQA by teachers and implementing data checks carried out by students and teachers before the end of the year will remedy these two issues.

Required action

The following action is required to improve the management and use of assessment-related data. The school must:

- transfer student achievement data to NZQA accurately, on a regular and timely basis (CAAS Guidelines 2.7iii).

Communication

How effectively does the school maintain the currency of assessment policy and procedures, and communicate them to staff, and students and their families?
(CAAS Guidelines 2.4i(f), 2.4v, 2.6, 2.7ii, 3)

Information to students inadequate Students must receive information on assessment practices to know their responsibilities and rights which is why it is a requirement of a school maintaining their consent to assess. The systems for supplying information to students about NCEA qualifications, assessment practices and course details do not help them to understand their pathway to qualifications or to make informed decisions about assessment.

While the students interviewed were very clear about what they wanted to do when they leave school and all three had a qualifications goal for the year, they did not know the detail of what they needed to realise either goal. They also could not describe some key assessment practices, nor what assessment was planned for them in some of the courses they were taking.

Students should receive information about school policies and practices and course assessment programmes at the start of each year. The school introduces students to NCEA and standards-based assessment in Year 10 to get them familiar with the assessment and qualifications systems. It was not made clear what information students receive prior to this assessment. The school reported providing information about the qualifications framework in the senior school subject choice booklet issued later in year 10. This is then verbally reinforced by tutors when they start working with year 11 students in April. However, students noted that the knowledge of tutors about NCEA varies. They also said that in most instances, they did not receive course outlines at the start of the year from their subject teachers.

Providing students with a course outline detailing the planned assessment programme allows them to identify how they might reach their qualifications goals and to better track their progress towards them. To be useful, course outlines should include which standards contribute toward meeting literacy or numeracy requirements and be written to meet student readership needs.

Principal's Nominee role needs review The role of the Principal's Nominee is to ensure the quality of all assessment for qualifications in a school. It includes leading students and teachers in assessment practice, managing assessment quality assurance and self-review, ensuring data integrity and communicating with all the parties concerned. In larger schools these roles are usually shared between three or more people, in recognition of the diverse range of the responsibilities and tasks expected, with the Principal's Nominee taking overall responsibility for ensuring all aspects are properly carried out.

The Principal's Nominee at James Cook High School is currently solely responsible for executing all aspects of the role. Given the size of the school and range of key areas that need attention, senior management agree that it is timely they review how the role is carried out with a view to ensuring that all aspects are resourced and can be effectively managed.

Required action

The following action is required maintain the currency of assessment policy and procedures, and communicate them to staff, students and families. The school must:

- provide adequate and appropriate information about assessment processes to students (CAAS Guidelines 2.4i)