

## Applying the Assessment Principles in a Secondary Setting: a Principles-based approach to planning and evaluation

*The principles of assessment may be used as a framework for planning teaching and learning programmes, designing approaches to assessment, and evaluating teaching and assessment. They provide an opportunity to focus on the end goal - improving students' learning - by considering the “why” of what we are doing.*

*This document is an adaptation of part of a keynote presentation at the NZAI National Conference 2021. Conference attendees requested copies of the questions, which are derived from the NZAI publication, [“Assessment to Improve Learning: Principles, Practices and Proofs”](#).*

### **Applying the principles to evaluate assessment practice**

The Proof parts of the PPP publication illustrate what we might look for as evidence that our assessment is effective and fulfilling its intended purpose. These statements can be reframed as evaluative questions at the conclusion of an assessment activity or programme of assessment, to determine how well the assessment supported student learning.

NZAI recognises that releasing a publication on the principles of assessment will not do a lot to change and improve practice unless it is supported. Thinking about how the principles can be applied across the education sector is essential if we want to deepen understanding about assessment and the information we gain from it.

This is particularly timely for secondary teachers as we face learning new ways of doing things under the Review of Achievement Standards. The following questions focus on the senior secondary sector, but with the exception of points that relate specifically to assessment for NCEA, the points also apply to primary school contexts.

Consider a situation where, overall, a class of students performed poorly in an assessment activity, a high proportion did not achieve, and even those who did achieve, did not do as well as the teacher thought they should have.

Does the teacher wonder whether the students prepared sufficiently well for the assessment and look for things they may or may not have done as a group to explain this disappointing result?

Or does the teacher question their teaching and assessment practice to identify what they might have done differently to give their students the best opportunity to achieve to their potential? How does a teacher go about evaluating their teaching and assessment programme to get the best evidence on which to base future improvements?

Evaluative questions may be derived from the Principles documented in the PPP.

### **1. Assessment guides improvement in learning and teaching**

*What evidence do I have of my students' progress and how well have I shared that with each of them?*

*How do I know if my oral and/or written feedback has been effective in identifying successes and gaps in learning for individual students?*

*How have I evaluated whether all of my students understand the requirements of the standards needed to achieve each part of the course?*

### **2. Assessment builds student agency**

*How have I involved my students in making decisions about assessments, and their purpose, content and timing?*

*How much do my students look forward to informal progress assessment as an opportunity to find out what they need to work on next?*

*How well have I supported my students to assess their own progress and achievement?*

*What access have I provided my students with, to good annotated student exemplars illustrating the standards required?*

### **3. Necessary and sufficient evidence of progress and achievement is gathered using a range of assessment approaches**

*What opportunities and assessment approaches have I provided for my students to measure their progress and achievement?*

*What have I done to identify and investigate discrepancies between informal and formal results?*

*How have I evaluated the balance between teaching, learning and assessment, and how have I ensured that each supports the other?*

**4. Curriculum is interconnected with learning, teaching and assessment**

*How have I evaluated my students' clarity of understanding of the curriculum expectations in my subject?*

*How have I assessed my students' progress and achievement against the curriculum expectations in my subject? How have I supported my students to assess their own progress?*

**5. Assessment is fair and serves the learning of all students**

*What have I done to identify barriers to achievement for internal assessments, and how have I modified the assessment activities to ensure they are accessible to each of my students?*

*How relevant was the assessment activity to the lives of my students? How well could they relate to any context or contexts within the activity?*

*How accessible was the activity for my students? Were there sufficient options to meet their diverse and varied needs? Did the stimulus materials provide the opportunity for individual students to respond from their own world view?*

*Were students able to choose how they wished to demonstrate their learning?*

**6. Assessment information is dependable**

*How do I know that the range of assessment tools I used were appropriate for their intended purpose? How can I be sure that the assessment judgements I made are dependable?*

*How do I ensure that my understanding of all aspects of administration, interpretation of formal assessments, and marking aligns with documented guidelines?*

*What collegial assistance or professional development have I used in the past year to improve my assessment capability?*

*What have I done to check my interpretation of the standards I am assessing against meets the relevant national standard?*

*How have I ensured that I have complied with the moderation procedures of my school department? What feedback have I received on the accuracy of my marker judgements and how have I responded to that?*

*What opportunities have I provided for my students who may wish to challenge my assessment decisions? How effectively have I communicated these to my students and how accessible is the process for them?*

## **7. Assessment information is essential at all tiers of the education system**

*How do I share and discuss assessment information with my students? How effectively are we using this information to further their learning? How effectively do I use it to adjust my teaching?*

*How well have I integrated assessment with teaching and learning and what evidence of progress does this provide me with for each of my students?*

*How does my school support students to talk with their parents/whanau about their learning and assessment? How do I ensure their assessment information and evidence of progress is clear and easily understood?*

*How do I use assessment information to inform my planning? How do I evaluate my students' understanding of my assessment practices and ensure they understand their importance?*