



**Tertiary Education Commission**  
**Te Amorangi Mātauranga Matua**

# **Performance-Based Research Fund**

Sector Reference Group – Consultation Paper #8

Review of the assessment framework

Part 1: Potential changes to the framework

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Every effort is made to provide accurate and factual content. The TEC, however, cannot accept responsibility for any inadvertent errors or omissions that may occur.

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## Purpose

1. This paper has been prepared as part of the consultation on the design of the 2018 Quality Evaluation. It is the first of two papers that will focus on possible changes to the Performance-Based Research Fund (PBRF) 2018 Quality Evaluation assessment process. This paper will focus on the assessment process and potential changes at an overarching level, while the second paper will focus on more detailed aspects of the framework.
2. More specifically, this paper:
  - provides information on the assessment process used in the Quality Evaluation process;
  - provides information about the review of the PBRF by the Ministry of Education and the decisions made by Cabinet in relation to changes to the Quality Evaluation assessment process;
  - sets out any issues related to the assessment process raised following the 2012 Quality Evaluation;
  - invites feedback on these issues and any SRG proposals; and
  - invites feedback on any other matters relating to the assessment framework not covered in this paper (and where it has not been indicated that it will be addressed in the second consultation paper on this topic).

## Design principles for the 2018 Quality Evaluation

3. The work of the Sector Reference Group (SRG) in the design of the 2018 Quality Evaluation is based on the following principles and considerations:
  - upholding the objectives and aims of the PBRF set out in Appendix 1;
  - drawing on the lessons learned as part of the previous Quality Evaluations;
  - accessing relevant experience and expertise across the SRG and the wider tertiary education sector;
  - ensuring that any proposed changes are exposed to rigorous sector and expert scrutiny;
  - achieving a level of consensus regarding how the 2018 Quality Evaluation should be conducted; and
  - avoiding changes that result in unreasonable compliance or high costs unless there is a robust rationale that indicates changes will result in significant improvements.

## Quality Evaluation assessment process

### **Background**

4. The Quality Evaluation assessment process is undertaken by peer review panels following the submission of Evidence Portfolios (EPs) by participating tertiary education organisations (TEOs).

5. The assessment framework consists of a scoring process made up of a points-based scoring system with a range from 0 – 7 that is used to allocate points to the components of an EP. For the 2018 Quality Evaluation there will be two components of an EP - Research Output (RO) and Research Contribution (RC). A '0' is the lowest point on the scale and would reflect that no evidence has been provided in the EP for that component, while a '7' is the highest point on the scale. The two components are weighted; the RO component will be weighted at 70% of the total score while the RC component will be weighted at the remaining 30% of the total score.
6. There are three distinct stages where points are assigned to the two components. These are the Preparatory, Preliminary and Calibrated component scoring stages. At the Calibrated component scoring stage, the weighted scores assist in determining and indicative Quality Category.
7. There are six Quality Categories that can be assigned - "A", "B", "C", "C(NE)", "R" and "R(NE)". The first four Quality Categories attract funding. The final two distinct stages of the assessment process are the assignment of a Holistic Quality Category which takes all aspects of the EP into consideration and the Final Quality Category which is recommended to the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) in the funding calculation.
8. The Quality Evaluation assessment process involves the submission of EPs by participating TEOs, the assignment of these EPs by peer review panel Chairs to assessors within the panel (including cross-referring EPs to other panels), assessment by individual assessors, and finally assessment by the wider panel resulting in the assignment of a Quality Category. The details and any issues that arose in these stages as part of the 2012 Quality Evaluation assessment are set out in the subsequent section of this paper.

### ***Ministry of Education review of the PBRF***

9. During 2012/2013 the Ministry of Education undertook a review of the PBRF in collaboration with the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment and the TEC.
10. This review sought to build on the existing performance of the PBRF to identify how it could be improved. It included a specific focus on what changes could be considered to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the PBRF through the simplification of the Quality Evaluation process.
11. Between August and October 2013, public feedback was sought on a range of proposed changes. This included several proposals that related to the Quality Evaluation assessment process:
  - a. limiting cross-referrals by TEOs to EPs that cover the interdisciplinary subject areas identified in the PBRF guidelines;<sup>1</sup>
  - b. disestablishing the use of specialist advisors;
  - c. the disestablishment of the expert advisory groups for Pacific Research and Professional and Applied Research – a new peer review panel would be established to assess Pacific research EPs and assign Quality Categories (similar to the Māori

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<sup>1</sup> Ministry of Education, Review of the Performance-Based Research Fund, Consultation Document, August, 2013, p.21.

Knowledge and Development subject panel) and experts in professional and applied research would be included in the relevant peer review subject panels; and<sup>2</sup>

- d. replacing scoring for individual components of an EP with a single quality category.
12. The rationale for the first three proposals was that cross-referrals to peer review panels, expert advisory groups and specialist advisers increased the time and complexity of the assessment process, but had minimal impact on the results. In the 2012 Quality Evaluation, 16.9% of all EPs submitted requested a cross-referral to one or more panels. However these cross-referrals resulted in a change in Quality Category in less than 1% of cases. The rationale for removing scores for individual components was that the multi-stage process for scoring EPs is complex and time consuming. This change would simplify and reduce the amount of time panels spend assessing EPs.
13. Feedback received by the Ministry of Education indicated general opposition to restricting cross-referrals to a pre-defined list of subject areas, with concerns centred on the difficulty in defining a fixed list, and the potential for this to disadvantage interdisciplinary research. In view of this feedback, Cabinet agreed to an alternative approach where cross-referrals are limited to peer review panel Chairs, on the basis that this will reduce the number of cross-referrals while allowing EPs to be reviewed by additional subject matter experts where this is required and will add value. The proposal to remove specialist advisers was agreed by Cabinet without any changes.
14. Feedback indicated majority support for removing the two expert advisory groups, and incorporating experts in professional and applied research into the subject area peer review panels, and these proposals were agreed by Cabinet without change. The report to Cabinet also indicated that new guidance for subject area peer review panels will draw on the work of the 2012 Quality Evaluation's Professional and Applied Expert Advisory Group, which developed detailed criteria for assessing the excellence of applied research.
15. The proposal to assign a single Quality Category score to each EP attracted general opposition from submitters who argued that having individual component scores is important for the transparency of the assessment process, supports the development of staff by providing more detail about their performance, and represents a relatively small contribution toward the overall transaction costs associated with the PBRF. This proposal was not progressed as a result of feedback.

## The 2012 Quality Evaluation assessment – process, issues and potential changes

### ***EP submission***

16. The 2012 Quality Evaluation guidelines (“2012 Guidelines”) required TEOs to only submit EPs to the TEC that the TEO believed were likely to achieve a fundable Quality Category (A, B, C or C(NE)).
17. The TEO were required to nominate a peer review panel as the Primary assessment panel. The Primary panel was responsible for the assessment of the EP including the assignment of the final Quality Category. This meant that the panel selected was the panel where the subject area best matched the research outputs within the EP,

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<sup>2</sup> The SRG has consulted on establishing a Pacific research peer review panel which would allow experts in Pacific research to more directly consider the unique paradigms, perspectives and critical stances unique to Pacific research, and assign quality categories to Pacific research Evidence Portfolios.

particularly the four Nominated Research Outputs (NROs). Panel Chairs had the discretion to transfer EPs to another panel if considered necessary.

18. TEOs were also required to nominate a subject area, and also state a 'primary field of research' for each EP. The subject area selected was the one that best matches their primary subject area of research and this is used in the reporting of the results. The 'primary field of research' was described at the level of a discipline or sub-discipline (e.g. educational psychology, molecular biology) and reflected both the research field of the EP's NROs and the balance of the staff member's research activity during the assessment period. The information on the 'primary field of research' was used by the Chair to guide the allocation of an EP for assessment.
19. The 2012 Guidelines also gave specific consideration to interdisciplinary research, defining it as "...any research undertaken by a staff member, or a group of staff members, that spans two or more disciplines or subject areas. It includes any part of the EP, although typically it will be represented in the Research Output component".<sup>3</sup> Specific information on subject areas which were more likely to cross subject-area boundaries than others was included in the guidelines in order to assist TEOs and staff members to identify where a cross-referral may be required.<sup>4</sup>
20. TEOs were advised to nominate the panel with the subject area that best matches the majority of the research outputs, particularly the NROs selected. Staff members (through their TEO) were able to request a cross-referral assessment by another panel that covered a subject area relevant to their research. While all TEO requests for cross-referral were considered, the decision on whether or not to action a cross-referral assessment was at the discretion of the Primary panel Chair.
21. The only exception to this rule was requests for cross-referral to the Māori Knowledge and Development (MKD) panel. All requests were considered and could be declined by the Chair of the MKD panel. Specific information was provided in the guidelines to assist TEOs to determine if a cross-referral to the MKD panel was appropriate ("*Guidelines for Special Input Requirements: Māori Research*").

#### *Issues and potential changes*

22. As noted in the previous section, the most significant issue related to the number of TEO-requested cross-referrals which had minimal impact on the EP assessment but increased the complexity of the assessment process. As a result of the Cabinet decisions, TEOs will be unable to request cross-referrals for EPs submitted to the 2018 Quality Evaluation, with the exception of cross-referral requests to the MKD and Pacific Research panels. Panel Chairs will be able to request a cross-referral assessment from any other subject panel(s).
23. The SRG has considered the prevalence of interdisciplinary research in the modern research environment, along with the impact this has on the composition of panels and the assessment process. The SRG believes this, along with the Cabinet decision to remove TEO-requested cross-referrals, makes specific advice on research areas more

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<sup>3</sup> TEC, PBRF Quality Evaluation Guidelines 2012, May 2013, pp.82-83.

<sup>4</sup> Subject areas identified in 2012 Guidelines were: Area Studies (e.g. Pacific studies, Asian studies, European studies), Audiology, Biomedical research (including pharmacology), Creative writing, Curatorial studies, Interior design, Industrial design and product design, Design history, Environmental studies, Food science and technology, Librarianship and information management, Māori education, Māori health, Multimedia and other media studies areas, and Tourism studies.

likely to cross subject-area boundaries redundant in the context of the current research environment. The SRG proposes to exclude information on cross subject-area boundaries from the 2018 Quality Evaluation Guidelines and seeks feedback on this proposal.

24. The SRG also seeks feedback in regard to the following areas which could be improved for the 2018 Quality Evaluation:
  - a. Are the subject areas covered by each panel appropriate? If not, what changes need to be considered?
  - b. Should the SRG review the *Guidelines for Special Input Requirements: Māori Research*? If so, what are the key issues?
  - c. Should the SRG and the Pacific Research peer review panel develop *Guidelines for Special Input Requirements: Pacific Research*?
25. The SRG will include any proposals for change in the second consultation paper on the assessment framework.

### ***Assignment of EPs***

26. The Quality Evaluation assessment process requires the Chairs of the peer review panels to assign each EP submitted to that panel (as the Primary panel) to two assessors (the panel pair). The Chair will also designate one of these two assessors as lead for that EP.
27. The 2012 Guidelines required Chairs to consider the following when allocated EPs:
  - the expertise of the panel members in the subject areas in which the staff member is being assessed;
  - any declared conflict of interest; and
  - achieving a balance of workload across panel members.
28. It was at this stage that Chairs could seek to transfer EPs to other panels that better matched the subject area of the research, and also determine whether the EP needed to be cross-referred to another peer review panel. In the 2012 Quality Evaluation, Chairs could also cross-refer to an expert advisory group and seek additional input from a specialist advisor.
29. Any EP accepted for a cross-referral assessment did not need to be assigned to more than one assessor in the additional panel.
30. Only 0.7% of EPs, or 55 individual EPs, were transferred to another subject panel which indicates that the process for selecting a primary panel is generally well understood by the sector.

### ***Issues and potential changes***

31. The main issue identified by panels in the 2012 Quality Evaluation was the lack of direction given to cross-referral panels from the primary panel Chair when a cross-referral was sought.
32. As Chairs will be solely responsible for requesting cross-referrals in the 2018 Quality Evaluation, the SRG proposes that Chairs provide specific advice on what part or parts of an EP need to be included in the cross-referral assessment. This commentary would

assist the cross-referral Chair to determine if the cross-referral is appropriate and assign it to an appropriate assessor. The SRG seeks feedback on this proposal.

33. The other issue identified by panel Chairs was the lack of clarity as it related to assignments and organisational conflicts of interest. This issue has been addressed with clearer advice on conflicts of interest at an organisational level consulted on in the earlier consultation paper on establishing peer review panels and the review of the conflicts of interest policy.

### ***Individual assessment***

34. Following the assignment of all EPs, each panel member was required to review the EPs assigned to them as a lead, second or cross-referral assessor in accordance with the process set out in the guidelines.
35. The first stage of the individual assessment process requires assessors to consider the information in EPs, accesses evidence of NROs, and assign a Preparatory score of 0 – 7 to each of the components.
36. If an EP claimed special circumstances, then the two scores were allocated to each component, one when the assessor **does not** take any special circumstances into account (*Preparatory–NoSpecial* scores) and one when the assessor **does** take any special circumstances into account, (*Preparatory-Special* scores). The assessor is required to confirm they have considered special circumstances where applicable.
37. Once all Preparatory scores were completed by the panel pair and any cross-referral assessors, the panel pair discussed the scores allocated to each component, calibrated against each other and determined the Preliminary component scores before the panel meeting. If the panel pair was unable to agree on Preliminary component scores, the Lead assessor could choose to progress the EP directly to the panel meeting. In the 2012 Quality Evaluation, this occurred only occurred with 1.7% of all EPs assessed, or 87 individual EPs. An *Indicative* Quality Category is derived from the Preliminary component scores agreed by the panel pair.

### ***Issues and potential changes***

38. The most significant issue identified by panels in the individual assessment stage of the 2012 Quality Evaluation was in regard to the poor quality of additional input provided by cross-referral assessments, and assessments by EAGs and specialist advisors. The Cabinet decision regarding the disestablishment of EAGs and specialist advisors negates the latter issue; however the issue of poor quality of additional input by cross-referral assessments has been considered by the SRG.
39. The SRG believes that requiring Chairs to provide specific advice on what part or parts of an EP need to be included in the cross-referral assessment, along with fewer cross-referral assessments, will improve the quality of the assessments provided. The SRG does however propose some changes to the cross-referral assessment process and seeks feedback on them; specifically:
  - Option 1: Require cross-referral assessors to provide a commentary which includes confirmation of the elements of the EP assessed and a rationale for the component scores provided; and require the panel pair to include any cross-referral assessor(s) in the discussion to determine the Preliminary component scores in cases where the scores are significantly different (i.e. more than two points difference).

- Option 2: Require cross-referral assessors to provide a commentary which includes confirmation of the elements of the EP assessed and a rationale for the component scores provided; and require the panel pair to include any cross-referral assessor(s) in the discussion to determine the Preliminary component scores in all cases.

40. The SRG has also identified issues regarding the assessment of special circumstances at this stage of the assessment process. The 2012 Quality Evaluation process required special circumstances to be assessed when determining Preparatory scores (which are un-calibrated and un-moderated), with consideration being given to special circumstances (along with other factors) at the Holistic assessment stage (where the entire panel is able to calibrate and moderate the Quality Category result). Information from previous Quality Evaluations shows that special circumstances have limited impact on Preparatory scores however; the requirement for each assessor to provide two scores for each component increases the complexity of the assessment. These factors raise questions about the value of assessing special circumstances during individual assessment. The SRG proposes that special circumstances should only be assessed at the Holistic scoring stage when the entire panel is well calibrated and able to participate in the assessment. The SRG seeks feedback on this proposal.
41. The SRG has consulted on the content of EPs in earlier consultation papers, however with the changes to the size of EPs and the increased accessibility of NROs in electronic form, the SRG proposes that the minimum percentage of NROs expected to be examined by panel members during the individual assessment stage should be increased from 25% to 50%. The SRG seeks feedback on this proposal.

### ***Scoring system including scoring new and emerging researchers***

42. As noted earlier in this paper, the Quality Evaluation has a points-based scoring system with a range from 0 – 7 that is used to allocate points to the two components of an EP (Research Output (RO) and Research Contribution (RC)).<sup>5</sup> A '0' is the lowest point on the scale and a '7' is the highest point on the scale. The RO component is weighted at 70% of the total score and the RC component is weighted at the remaining 30% of the total score.
43. The SRG consulted on retaining the 0 – 7 scoring system for the RC component which was strongly supported by the sector and other stakeholders. The TEC has agreed in-principle that the RC component will be scored using the range of 0 – 7 points.
44. This means that the scoring system will calculate EP scores by multiplying the score for each component by the weighting for that component. The maximum weighted score available is 700 as shown in the table below.

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<sup>5</sup> The Research Contribution component is made up of the former Peer Esteem and Contribution to the Research Environment components and now allows for esteem and contributions inside and outside of academia to be submitted.

PBRF Scoring / Quality Category Guide									
		RO Score							
		0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
RC Score	0	0	70	140	210	280	350	420	490
	1	30	100	170	240	310	380	450	520
	2	60	130	200	270	340	410	480	550
	3	90	160	230	300	370	440	510	580
	4	120	190	260	330	400	470	540	610
	5	150	220	290	360	430	500	570	640
	6	180	250	320	390	460	530	600	670
	7	210	280	350	420	490	560	630	700
Quality Category		R		C		B		A	

*New and emerging researcher scoring*

45. In the 2012 Quality Evaluation, there were separate rules for assessing new and emerging researchers with the specific purpose of awarding the Quality Category “C(NE)”.
46. While new and emerging researchers were required to meet the same standards as all other staff members to receive an “A” or “B” Quality Category, the scoring system recognised that new and emerging researchers were less likely to have significant volumes of research related activity that could be submitted in the Peer Esteem and Contribution to the Research Environment components (replaced by the RC component).
47. As a result a new and emerging researcher awarded a score of ‘2’ for their RO component and a ‘1’ or ‘0’ in their RC component, would have their weighted score automatically rounded up from 140 or 170 to 200. As there is no Cabinet requirement to change this aspect of the scoring system, this provision will continue to apply to the scoring of new and emerging researchers in the 2018 Quality Evaluation. The table below outlines the scoring differences.

PBRF Scoring / Quality Category Guide (New and Emerging only)									
		RO Score							
		0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
RC Score	0	0	70	<b>200</b>	210	280	350	420	490
	1	30	100	<b>200</b>	240	310	380	450	520
	2	60	130	200	270	340	410	480	550
	3	90	160	230	300	370	440	510	580
	4	120	190	260	330	400	470	540	610
	5	150	220	290	360	430	500	570	640
	6	180	250	320	390	460	530	600	670
	7	210	280	350	420	490	560	630	700
Quality Category		R(NE)		C(NE)		B		A	

48. Panels were advised in the guidelines that “*In order for a new and emerging researcher to have the potential to secure the new Quality Category “C(NE)”, evidence will need to be provided that includes at least the following:*

a) *The successful completion of a Doctoral degree or equivalent during the assessment period for the Quality Evaluation AND ‘Other’ research outputs of an adequate quality and quantity, bearing in mind the time period during which the staff member has been PBRF-eligible (a minimum of two quality-assured research outputs would normally be expected)*

OR

b) *Research outputs equivalent to a) above.*<sup>6</sup>

49. The guidelines also provided a definition of Doctoral degree or equivalent as *“In most disciplines, a Doctoral degree is regarded as the appropriate entry-level degree for an academic appointment involving research; in some other disciplines, however, either a Masters degree (in, for example, Creative and Performing Arts) or a professional qualification (such as in Law or Education) may be the customary qualification for a research career. Staff members without a Doctoral degree would normally need to provide evidence of more than the minimum number of research outputs (i.e. two).”*<sup>7</sup>

#### *Issues and potential changes*

50. The SRG identified issues relating to the new and emerging researcher criteria as part of the earlier consultation paper on staff eligibility. However, the scoring advice and evidence requirements are separate to this. Some concerns have been raised regarding the evidence requirements for the “C(NE)” Quality Category and the SRG seeks feedback on whether this is sufficiently clear or whether additional guidance is required, and if so what are the key issues relating to this aspect of the scoring system.

51. The SRG will include any proposals for change in the second consultation paper on the assessment framework.

#### *Component scoring and tie-point descriptors*

52. In the Quality Evaluation, the points-based scoring system used by panels provides a descriptor for each component and also descriptors for the tie-points on the 0 – 7 points scale. The tie-points are the scores of “2”, “4” and “6”.

53. There has been no substantive change to the RO component however, the SRG seeks feedback on whether any changes are required to either the RO component descriptor or the tie-point descriptors, and if so, what change is required and why.

54. The SRG will need to develop a new RC component descriptor and tie-point descriptors. The Cabinet paper that detailed the changes to the PBRF signalled that the work of the 2012 Quality Evaluation’s Professional and Applied EAG, which developed detailed criteria for assessing the excellence of applied research, should be drawn upon for this work.

55. The SRG proposes to include a draft RC component descriptor and tie-point descriptors in the second part of the assessment framework consultation paper; however feedback is sought on key considerations for this work.

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<sup>6</sup> TEC, PBRF Quality Evaluation Guidelines 2012, May 2013, p.133

<sup>7</sup> *ibid*

### ***Panel assessment***

56. The panel assessment process determines the Calibrated Panel component scores and Quality Category, undertakes the Holistic assessment, and determines the Final Quality Category during the peer review panel meetings. All panel members are required to attend the panel meetings, which are between three and five days long.
57. The total weighted score as discussed above allows for an initial placement of each EP into one of the six available Quality Categories. This placement does not necessarily determine the Final Quality Category that will be assigned to an EP.
58. At the panel meeting, the panels use exemplar EPs to further calibrate the entire group in relation to each of the tie-points and the Quality Categories. This process of discussion and consideration of specific EPs results in each EP receiving Calibrated Panel component scores and a Calibrated Panel Quality Category. It is the Calibrated Panel Quality Category that is then reviewed by the panel as part of the holistic assessment process.
59. The purpose of the holistic assessment is to ascertain which of the available Quality Categories is most appropriate for an EP, taking all relevant factors into consideration which includes but is not limited to:
  - the Quality Category descriptors;
  - component scoring at different stages of the assessment process;
  - any issues or uncommon factors about the EP (e.g. in relation to quantity and/or quality issues);
  - whether special circumstances are sufficient to affect the Quality Category;
  - the fact that the scoring system does not facilitate the use of fractional scores; and
  - the fact that the component scores and Quality Category are not required to match if the holistic assessment produces a different result.
60. In the 2012 Quality Evaluation, most Calibrated Panel Quality Categories became the final Quality Category. In total 0.8% of EPs received a different Final Quality Category as a result of the holistic assessment stage.

### ***Issues and potential changes***

61. The main issue identified by panels at the end of the 2012 Quality Evaluation was in relation to the holistic assessment phase of the process. Panels recommended that more detailed and explicit advice be provided for changing a Quality Category as a result of the holistic assessment, and questions were raised regarding the timing of this assessment in the assessment process. Providing specific holistic tie-point descriptors was also suggested.
62. The SRG proposes providing additional guidance on the holistic assessment stage of the assessment process, including the specific consideration of special circumstances as identified previously, and seeks feedback on this.

### ***Quality Categories***

63. The result of the Quality Evaluation assessment is the assignment of one of the six Quality Categories to each EP submitted for assessment. Each of the Quality Categories has a descriptor which provides a reference point for panels, although the descriptors are generalised.

64. While the SRG has not identified any significant issues relating to the Quality Category descriptions, concerns have been raised regarding the term “world-class” and the distinction the definitions make between international and national contribution and recognition. The SRG seeks feedback on whether this is an area that could be improved for the 2018 Quality Evaluation.

65. The SRG will include any proposals for change in the second consultation paper on the assessment framework.

### **Moderation**

66. The moderation process sits over the assessment process to ensure that standards are consistent across peer review panels and that the guidelines are properly adhered to.

67. The Moderation Panel consists of three moderators and the peer review panel Chairs. One of the moderators will be appointed as Principal Moderator and will act as Chair of the Moderation Panel. The other two moderators are appointed as Deputy Moderators.

68. The moderation process is designed to promote systematic reflection on the issues of consistency, standards and cross-panel calibration by:

- creating an environment in which the judgements of the peer review panels generate consistency on a cross-panel basis, while at the same time not reducing the panel judgements to a mechanistic application of the assessment criteria;
- providing an opportunity for independent review of the standards and processes being applied by panels;
- ensuring the consistent application of the special circumstances provisions and the consistent assessment of new and emerging researchers;
- establishing mechanisms and processes by which material differences or apparent inconsistencies in standards and processes can be addressed by panels; and
- advising the TEC Board on any issues regarding consistency of standards across panels.

69. The SRG has not identified any significant issues relating to the Moderation process. No substantive changes are proposed however the SRG confirms that, as in the 2012 Quality Evaluation, there will be no comparison of the Quality Categories assigned in any previous Quality Evaluation against the Indicative Quality Categories arising out of the preparatory and preliminary scores assigned by panel members in the 2018 Quality Evaluation.

### **Providing feedback**

70. Feedback is sought from the sector and other key stakeholders on the information outlined in this paper, as well as the options for consideration.

71. The SRG also welcomes feedback on any other matters not included in this paper that relate to the assessment framework, and have not been identified for inclusion in the second consultation paper on the assessment framework.

72. Feedback can be completed:

- online: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/THTNV7N>

- or via email using the template provided on the TEC website, with completed templates being emailed to [PBRFSRG@tec.govt.nz](mailto:PBRFSRG@tec.govt.nz).
73. All feedback would be appreciated as soon as possible, but no later than 5pm Friday 21 August 2015.

## Appendix 1: Objectives and principles of the PBRF

### *Objectives of the PBRF*

The primary objectives of the PBRF are to:

- increase the quality of basic and applied research at New Zealand's degree granting TEOs;
- support world-leading research-led teaching and learning at degree and postgraduate levels;
- assist New Zealand's TEOs to maintain and lift their competitive rankings relative to their international peers; and
- provide robust public information to stakeholders about research performance within and across TEOs.

In doing so the PBRF will also:

- support the development of postgraduate student researchers and new and emerging researchers;
- support research activities that provide economic, social, cultural and environmental benefits to New Zealand, including the advancement of Mātauranga Māori; and
- support technology and knowledge transfer to New Zealand businesses, iwi and communities.<sup>8</sup>

### *Principles of the PBRF*

The PBRF is governed by the following principles:

- *Comprehensiveness*: the PBRF should appropriately measure the quality of the full range of original investigative activity that occurs within the sector, regardless of its type, form, or place of output;
- *Respect for academic traditions*: the PBRF should operate in a manner that is consistent with academic freedom and institutional autonomy;
- *Consistency*: evaluations of quality made through the PBRF should be consistent across the different subject areas and in the calibration of quality ratings against international standards of excellence;
- *Continuity*: changes to the PBRF process should only be made where they can bring demonstrable improvements that outweigh the cost of implementing them;
- *Differentiation*: the PBRF should allow stakeholders and the government to differentiate between providers and their units on the basis of their relative quality;

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<sup>8</sup> The objectives were revised as a part of the Ministry of Education's review of the PBRF and agreed by Cabinet in February 2014.

- *Credibility*: the methodology, format and processes employed in the PBRF must be credible to those being assessed;
- *Efficiency*: administrative and compliance costs should be kept to the minimum consistent with a robust and credible process;
- *Transparency*: decisions and decision-making processes must be explained openly, except where there is a need to preserve confidentiality and privacy;
- *Complementarity*: the PBRF should be integrated with new and existing policies, such as charters and profiles, and quality assurance systems for degrees and degree providers; and
- *Cultural inclusiveness*: the PBRF should reflect the bicultural nature of New Zealand and the special role and status of the Treaty of Waitangi, and should appropriately reflect and include the full diversity of New Zealand's population.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> These principles were first enunciated by the Working Group on the PBRF. See [Investing in Excellence](#), pp.8-9.

## Appendix 2: Links to relevant papers

[PBRF: Quality Evaluation Guidelines 2012](#), May 2013

[Review of the Performance-Based Research Fund Consultation Document](#), August, 2013

[Review of the Performance-Based Research Fund, Summary of Submissions received on the Review of the Performance-Based Research Fund Consultation Document](#), March, 2014

[Investing in Excellence](#), 2002

[Appendix to Assessment Framework consultation paper: Relevant information from 2012 Quality Evaluation Guidelines](#)