

Stakeholder Feedback July 2015

PBRF SRG Consultation Paper #5 - Panel Establishment and Conflicts of Interest

The information below is a summary of the Performance-Based Research Fund (PBRF) Sector Reference Group's (SRG's) fifth consultation paper on establishing peer review panels and a review of the conflicts of interest policy. Where the organisation is not identified in the comment, the TEC has not attributed those comments to any organisation. Each line of commentary denotes a separate response from an organisation or individual.

Number	Organisation name
1	Massey University
2	University of Canterbury
3	University of Waikato
4	Auckland University of Technology
5	Victoria University of Wellington
6	University of Otago
7	University of Auckland
8	Tertiary Education Union Te Hautū Kahurangi o Aotearoa
9	Individual
10	Individual
11	Eastern Institute of Technology
12	Christchurch Polytechnic Institute of Technology
13	Individual

A. Panel composition

Do you recommend any changes to the proposed statement for panel selection?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	53.8%	7
No	46.2%	6

If Yes (please specify)

In principle we support the proposed statement, however greater clarity is required with reference to the ability to represent 'inter-disciplinary researchers' - we have a concern that appointing inter-disciplinary researchers may dilute the disciplinary expertise of the panel.

The SRG proposal recommends that panel Chairs are provided with more specific advice. We agree with that approach. We found the SRG proposal for panel composition insufficient in specifics and that it relied on generalisations such as "fair gender representation" (what is fair?) and "the ability to represent: applied/practice based researchers ..." (representation determined how?). In particular, the SRG proposal passes the "specific advice on panel composition" to the TEC to determine. Instead, we propose the following:

1. Subject area expertise requirements are predicted based on the portfolio submitted for the 2012 assessment. This exercise would determine the volume of portfolios in each subject area, predicting any growth based on TEO advice, and any particular requirements (e.g. type of expertise) for a particular subject area.
2. Determine the optimal number of portfolios to be assessed by each panel member and then ensure number of subject area reviewers based on a minimum of two reviewers per subject area, ideally three to manage conflicts of interest.
3. Use the matrix below to profile each potential panel member to then ensure each panel and subject area has as a complement of reviewers of high calibre that are as representative as possible of the various stakeholders and desired attributes.

[see appendix for matrix]

In general, we are in agreement with the proposed statement.

However, the consultation paper isn't completely clear on how this will work or what the term "open" means. Does this mean that anyone can make nominations for Chair (see paragraph 23), or only those individuals as in the 2012 round (see paragraph 8)? It appears to be the former, it might be made a bit more explicit.

It also seems to be the case that TEC will appoint an initial cohort of five panel members (see paragraph 26). Will these panel members come from the open nominations for the Chair position? Will Chairs participate in this or will they be chosen at the same time?

In general, the University supports the proposed statement for panel selection, with one clarification, one exception and one query.

Clarification: “an appropriate mix of new and previous panel members”

It should be made clear that appropriate discipline balance and assessor quality are higher priorities than ensuring that some panel members have served on PBRF panels previously. This goal could be relocated to the end of the list, preceded with a proviso such as: “If all the above characteristics can be fulfilled, then striving for a mix of new and previous panel members is encouraged.”

Exception: “representation from across different sectors and other organisations”

This seems to be referring to sectors outside the tertiary sector, and therefore is inappropriate as a general aim for the panels. The role of the panel is to assess research quality, and academic peers/ CRI researchers are, in most cases, the most appropriate assessors. There are exceptions (such as where industry expertise is useful), but these should be decided on a panel-by-panel basis and then indicated within panel-specific guidelines, rather than external representatives becoming a blanket priority across all panels.

The 2012 PBRF guidelines noted that: “panel members have been appointed to the panels for their specific expertise and knowledge, and are not to act as representatives of their employer or discipline.” The University endorses this as a 2018 PBRF stipulation also.

Query: What does the following mean? “will aim to achieve where possible...the ability to represent applied/practice-based researchers; early career researchers; inter-disciplinary researchers; Māori researchers; and Pasifika researchers”

If it means that these groups of researchers should have a representative on each panel, where possible, then the benefits and risks of having early career researchers assessing EPs need to be investigated.

But if it means that panels should take the characteristic interests and research contexts of these groups into account, then written guidance on those interests and contexts should be provided to all members of all panels. The University of Auckland would support such a guide.

Suggest a small re-wording as follows:

Paragraph 21: Peer review panels will aim to achieve the highest calibre of panel members, who jointly represent a comprehensive range of subjects and interests and where possible (with other bullet points following from here).

The criteria for panel composition are “where possible” so a trade-off may occur in favour of a selection of traditional academic experts with little experience in applied/practice based, or Maori research. It should be essential that such expertise be included as there is no expert advisory group. One of the roles of the panel is to provide the criteria and guidelines. It is therefore important that people with specific knowledge in applied research be able to provide insight into the criteria which would adequately assess impact for that panel.

Representation from tertiary institutions other than Universities, needs to reflect the proportion of submissions from other tertiary institutions.

There should be a minimum number of new panellists appointed to replace those who have served the longest, for succession planning and sustainability.

25% international representation is much higher than in the last round. In 2012 Biological Sciences had 5% and Business had 7% reviewers from international institutions. No discussion was presented about any issues arising from a lack of international reviewers. This heavy weighting will likely disadvantage applied and practice based research and Maori and Pasifika research, as the appointments are likely to be traditional University academics. Being international, the impact of the research may be more difficult to recognise. It also reduces the opportunity to develop skills and experience of New Zealand reviewers and therefore may not be sustainable.

Do you agree that panel Chairs should be provided with more specific advice on panel composition outside of the general statement on panel composition?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	100.0%	13
No	0.0%	0
Possibly	0.0%	0

Comments

The composition of a panel may be different across the subject areas (e.g. one panel may benefit from additional panel members with industry background) so it would be difficult to produce a generic ‘matrix’ for Chairs to appoint. A custom ‘matrix’ developed utilising previous 2012 PBRF submission data is preferred if this guide is to be developed.

Yes - providing this is for the Chairs reference and does not dictate panel membership.

The University of Waikato supports the SRG's proposal to widen representation of panel composition by also referencing early career researchers, applied/practice-based researchers, other researchers and members from outside academia.

We also believe that refreshing the composition of panels to a large extent is important, given the length of time the PBRF has been operating, to avoid the potential for calcification of panel views of specific areas, researchers or previous scores.

Finally, Waikato agrees panel Chairs should be provided with more specific advice on panel composition and recommends that to further enhance PBRF transparency, TEOs should also be given copies of any panel-mix matrixes.

Yes, agree and suggest the above table comprises the specific advice provided.

The SRG is no doubt aware that the composition and behaviour of the assessment panel members is the most critical aspect of the entire PBRF quality assessment. Excluding the elements of the evidence portfolio, the panel membership and the process of assessment is the single most important component of the entire quality assessment. If the panel members are not viewed as representative, independent or credible in the role then the credibility of the fundamental basis of the assessment - unbiased peer review is undermined and the reliability of the assessment in doubt.

Yes; for example, a matrix, as suggested, would be useful, particularly in order to ensure that all discipline and fields (and sub-disciplines, where necessary) are appropriately covered. And, as discussed above, where expertise outside of the research sector would be useful, it can be noted within this advice, rather than as a general guide for all panels.

Yes - it will be helpful for Chairs to be able to review the composition of their panel based on previous EPs, while always bearing in mind the overall guidelines for panel composition.

We have some concern with a potential conflict between selecting "the highest calibre of panel members" and "early career researchers". Otherwise we agree with the recommended mix of panel members, particularly with respect to consideration of non-university panel members.

Yes. It will be different for the different panels.

B. Chair selection process

Do you agree that there should be an open nomination process for panel Chairs for the 2018 Quality Evaluation peer review panels?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	100.0%	13
No	0.0%	0

Do you recommend any changes to the existing selection criteria (paragraph 9 of the consultation paper)?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	27.3%	3
No	72.7%	8

If Yes (please specify)

We recommend the following changes to the existing criteria:

1. That although desirable for logistical reasons, Panel chairs do not have to be based in New Zealand. Having international Panel Chairs will enhance the rigour and validity of the assessment process. Note that we have already suggested in the panel selection matrix that at least one Chair is not from a TEO, this could be an overseas based academic or a New Zealand based researcher (e.g. from a CRI or funding body).
2. Re-phrase the term "the need to appoint people of high academic standing" to a "people who are highly esteemed and recognised researchers" or similar so non-academics, (e.g. leading researchers in a CRI) are not excluded from the criteria of Panel Chair membership. The SRG paper (paragraph 25) acknowledges the need for wider representation and this representation should be extended to Panel Chair selection. See the table selection matrix for a suggested Chair profile.

It should be clarified that "previous experience in chairing assessment panels" is not referring to chairing PBRF assessment panels. Otherwise, this criterion is in conflict with a further proposed, useful criterion: "the desirability of appointing people from different subject areas (to the previous chairs) where feasible". Appointing the same chairs for a second time is not necessarily problematic, but should not be a priority.

Chair should be NZ based. Other duties of the Chair could be adversely affected by international appointments, if there is a lack of local knowledge. For example, the Chair appoints other panel members and determines the mitigations for potential conflicts of interest, local networks and understandings would be valuable. Appointing Chairs who have chaired panels means there is little opportunity for development of future Chairs. A deputy Chair, or a person with good chairing skills and experience in other types of moderation or assessment processes could be candidates. A balance of institutional affiliation, gender and ethnicity is appropriate.

Comments

The University of Waikato strongly supports the open nomination process for 2018 PBRF panel Chairs proposed by the SRG. However Waikato is concerned with the suggestion that Chairs may be required to completely step aside from their other management responsibilities in relation to PBRF for their universities. This may be too onerous an expectation in some instances, for which detailed conflict of interest caveats (for individuals, subject areas and/or institutions), may suffice.

Yes, we agree there should be an open nomination process. We also suggest that the stakeholders in the assessment (e.g. Funding agencies, research users) are also asked to put forward nominations - this may have occurred in past but we would like to ensure wide stakeholder involvement in the process.

An open nomination process for panel Chairs is an excellent proposal.

The open nomination process ensures as broad a pool of possible candidates can be considered. We also support actions to increase awareness of the nomination process, particularly from those sectors (such as ITPs) that have been less well represented.

We agree with the suggested criteria.

C. Panel selection process

Do you support a two stage selection process for panels, including the timing of this process?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	100.0%	12
No	0.0%	0

Comments

We strongly support the proposed early nomination and appointment of panel members to facilitate the development of the panel specific guidelines, however we are concerned with the proposed maximum of 5 members. There needs to be fair representation of all relevant disciplines in the development of the panel specific guidelines (especially for panels with broad discipline requirements) and the maximum of 5 contributors may not adequately represent all perspectives. Depending on the process for the approval of the panel specific guidelines (whether there is sector wide consultation prior to approval), would influence our recommendation for the number of panel appointees within the first cohort.

We support the process for open nomination of panel members for appointment in the second cohort of panel members. It would be helpful if the areas of specific gaps are distributed to TEOs to help generate nominations.

The University of Waikato supports the SRG's proposal to encourage a wider range of nominations from non-university based candidates. We support a two stage selection process for panels but recommend it include a formal process to collect TEO feedback on knowledge gaps or an appropriate mix and balance of members as identified in the panels.

The University of Waikato considers the list of preferred panel member attributes in Appendix 2 as ideals to aim for but suggests that this may not always be possible e.g. overseas panel members' with a sound knowledge of the Treaty of Waitangi.

Waikato would appreciate further clarification on the last bullet point in Appendix 2 of how will knowledge of the Treaty of Waitangi be assessed, and who will determine whether a TEO's nomination for a panel meets the 'sound knowledge' criteria ?

We agree with the two stage selection process and applaud the SRG for seeking to develop the 2018 panel specific guidelines in 2016. The need to develop and publish guidelines early is a necessary requirement and possible attrition of early panel members is an acceptable risk.

We propose that TEOs only, should have the right to challenge the appointment of panel appointments or the lack of an appointment (e.g. too few panel members in a subject area) providing specifics in each case. The rationale for this proposal is:

- a) We were disappointed to learn of a case in the 2012 assessment where panel members from a single TEO successfully lobbied for the removal of a particular panel member. Such impropriety led to a significant lack of confidence in the panel appointment and assessment process by the affected TEO.
- b) We are aware, and have already notified the TEC, of a subject area that had a single recognised expert while other subjects with fewer portfolios had at least two. This led to much consternation by affected individuals and again compromised the integrity of the assessment process.

The proposal outlined above should be welcomed as a mechanism to ensure the rigour of the assessment process.

Yes, but again clarity is needed in what is being done here. Our reading is that TEC will choose Chairs and five panel members for each panel from a list of nominees for the Chair position. Is that the case, or will the Chair choose the initial panel? Also, it is not clear where the pool of possible panel members for the second stage of the selection process comes from. Does the chair identify this group or will there be an open call for panel member nominations.

We propose a third stage. After the final panellists have been confirmed and are made public, that the TEOs may have the opportunity to identify specific subject areas that are either missing or will not be covered by the panel when expertise is removed due to conflict of interest.

Yes, the University supports the two-stage selection process for panels. However, we recommend that the initial cohort is at least 70% of the final panel membership, rather than a maximum of five members as per the proposal.

The benefits of appointing a larger group early are two-fold: 1. It allows for the input of a wider variety of discipline/ subject expertise during the development of panel-specific guidelines, and 2. If appointments are left to a later stage of the process, many of the most suitable candidates will have ruled themselves out through participating in activities that would constitute an institutional conflict of interest if they then became panellists. For example, they could provide advice or guidance on the preparation of EPs within their TEO. If appointed to the panel early, they can avoid giving such advice and other such activities that would constitute conflict of interest.

While, as noted in the consultation document, there is a small risk of turnover if individuals appointed early are unable to continue in the role, turnover in and of itself does not require much more effort (if any) than appointing new people late in the piece as a matter of course, as is being proposed.

Additional comments

The SRG's identification of a need for a wider range of panel member nominations from non-university based candidates seems to be based on the number of EPs submitted by non-university TEOs (9%). However, the much lower proportion of senior and discipline-leading academics outside the university sector also needs to be taken into account: Of the 834.83 EPs assigned an "A" in 2012, only 3.5 related to staff employed outside the university sector. Panels should be made up of discipline experts (as noted in Section A, they are not representatives of their organisations); and the pool of such researchers outside the universities is too low to expect an increase of non-university panel members for the current PBRF round.

Yes - while this leaves some risk of losing panel members through the lengthy time period, it does allow for plenty of time for the first cohort to assist with developing the panel-specific guidelines. However Chairs would need to use their best endeavours to reflect the diversity characteristics prioritised for panels in selection of the initial cohort. Otherwise important perspectives may be missed in the initial drafting stage.

See Any Other Matters

See Any Other Matters

Yes, we support the development of a two stage selection process. We strongly support the selection of a Deputy Chair and an initial cohort of panel members in order to produce panel-specific guidelines for release in June 2016. The selection of additional panel members as necessary at a later stage is also appropriate.

Panel specific guidelines are essential for preparing submissions in the most effective manner as they describe the evidence to be collected, how to assess a submission (and provide evidence) where the quality assessment process is atypical and what is expected in a submission. The latter being important in deciding whether to submit an evidence portfolio. It is therefore critical that descriptive guidelines be produced as soon as possible. It may be that another public selection round for panel members is required to replace attrition from the original cohort. While not explicit it is assumed that the second round of panel selection is to cover gaps in the submissions. No details of the targeted selection process is given, but it could be perceived to be influenced by personal knowledge of suitable candidates which could skew the composition of the panel back to more traditional University academia. Recruitment could be based on the nominations received in stage 1 of the selection process. Chairs directly nominating panel members is not a transparent process and open to the perception of bias.

Some guidelines were very helpful (e.g. Creative and Performing Arts) and others little more than a repetition of the information already available.

D. Conflicts of Interest policy

Do you recommend any changes to the proposed conflicts of interest policy?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	58.3%	7
No	41.7%	5

If Yes (please specify)

The University of Waikato recommends the 'Conflict at institutional level' definition that requires a staff member to step away from their TEO PBRF duties, not come into force until a staff member is formally selected by the TEC as a PBRF panel member or alternatively the TEC calls for nominations for panel membership.

Waikato agrees that once a staff member has been selected to a panel this gives them access to 'privileged' PBRF assessment information and at that time there should be a requirement for the staff member to stand aside from internal PBRF activities described under the section 'Conflict at institutional level'.

We recommend a number of changes to the policy on conflicts of interest:

1. Change the Definition of a conflict of interest to include the term 'potential conflict of interest' as well as the existing actual or perceived conflicts. This approach is consistent with the HRC1 and the Australian ARC guidelines on conflicts of interest².
2. That the definition of interests that might be conflicts and their nature (i.e. major or minor) as outlined by the UK REF 2014³ be adopted by the PBRF.
3. A panel member cannot be involved in the assessment, or discussion of a portfolio, from a TEO for whom that panel member has a major conflict of interest. A major conflict of interest would be the panel member is an employee or recent employee (last five years) of the TEO. Historically this would have been a problem in terms of adequate panel coverage given the small academic community in New Zealand and dominance of academics on the panels. However, with the more broad and inclusive membership now being sought (i.e. fewer TEO panel members) the issue of too many conflicted panel members is greatly minimised.
4. As per the standard set by the UK REF⁴, the conflicts of interest register should be made public to ensure full transparency of the notified conflicts of interest. The register to be made public two months prior to commencement of the assessment and to be updated in the course of any additional notifications of conflicts. We believe this is a necessary policy to ensure full declaration of conflicts. It is not expected that the detail of the conflict is made public, merely the TEO to which the conflict applies and the possible nature of the conflict (with reference to the REF model this might be something like: 'employer', 'family', 'current or recent research relationship', etc.).
5. Panel members should not be present during any time in which their portfolio is being reviewed, nor privy to the outcome of the discussion except when the full result for the TEO is provided. We believe the behaviour of panels was inconsistent in this regard.

1 Health Research Council of New Zealand (2014) Peer Review Manual. Health Research Council of New Zealand. Available at: <http://www.hrc.govt.nz/news-and-publications/publications/research-funding>

2 Australian Research Council (2009) ARC Guidelines for Disclosure of Interests and Confidentiality Obligations. Available at: http://www.arc.gov.au/about_arc/COI.htm

3 REF 2014 (2012) Panel criteria and working methods, Annex A, Summary of additional information about outputs. Available at: http://www.ref.ac.uk/media/ref/content/pub/panelcriteriaandworkingmethods/01_12a.pdf

4 REF 2014 (2010) Units of assessment and recruitment of expert panels. Available at: <http://www.ref.ac.uk/pubs/2010-01/>

We recommend some standardisation of conflict of interests across panels, to ensure consistency in how conflicts are managed

It may be the case in some areas that have a small number of scholars in them, that some flexibility be given to chairs on determining participation in the review. For example, if a scholar has written with the staff member whose EP is under review, but hasn't done so during the evaluation period, and if there is limited expertise available, then that panel member should perhaps be allowed to participate in the deliberations at the discretion of the Chair.

It might also be desirable to put a time limit on when a person has assisted another in work on their EP (paragraph 30, "Conflict at Institutional Level", bullet points one and two, p. 10). Perhaps this can be amended to say that there is a conflict if this has occurred within one year of the submission date for EPs. Another possibility is to allow assistance up to the point in time where an individual accepts an appointment to a panel.

The University supports the proposed policy, with some clarifications.
Some of the given examples of possible conflict of interest need clarifying:

1. All the examples of research links should include research links at any point during the assessment period, including links which are no longer current. For example (addition in red), "assessment of the EP of... a colleague with whom the panellist has, or has had at any time during the assessment period, a direct research collaboration."

2. "Assessment of the EP of... a current colleague within the same small academic unit or research team"
"small academic unit" should be quantified and/or further defined.

3. "Assessment of the EP of... a colleague with whom the panellist has a direct teaching and/or research collaboration"

"direct teaching collaboration" should be clarified and further defined. For example, if both the panel member and the researcher whose EP is under assessment have both given guest lectures in the same course at separate times, this is unlikely to constitute a conflict of interest. However, if they both convened a course together, or taught in the same sessions, that may constitute a conflict of interest

4. "assessment of an EP where... a panellist has a substantial research collaboration in the assessment period"

The differences between this and the example cited above in point 3 seem negligible. The University prefers that the following 2012 example is used again: "Assessment of an EP which cites, as one of its NROs, a work that the panel member has co-authored."

5. "assessment of an EP where... both the panellist and the staff member may receive a personal financial benefit from a high Quality Category."

This should be changed to "assessment of an EP where... the panellist may receive a personal financial benefit from a high Quality Category"

In addition, while we agree with the proposal to deal with conflict at institutional level (p10), the wording could be clarified to: "A panel member cannot be a lead assessor for any EPs from their own TEO. Panel members can be secondary assessors for EPs from their own TEO unless they have had involvement in the internal assessment of their TEO's EPs, and/or they have provided specific advice or guidance on any of their TEO's individual EPs."

We recommend including specific reference to employment relationship problems in the section that provides examples of possible conflicts of interest.

Identify a conflict of interest p9 middle section Question 1: an objective well informed observer may consider that there is the risk that judgement could be compromised. Conflict of interest is as much about the perception as about the reality. Current wording is "likely". Question 2: does that interest create a perception that the panellist could operate in a way contrary to fair, impartial and effective review.

Current wording is "incentive" but conflict of interest is about perception as well as reality.

Third section of table p9 a panellist has a substantial research collaboration (insert "with the EP") in the assessment period.

Comments

No, the existing process is sufficient. A reference to the actions or consequences of a breach of the policy would be beneficial.

Focusing on the development of the panel-specific guidelines for release in June 2016 is less important than the development and release of the final PBRF Guidelines in 2016.

Conflict of interests could include known professional differences as bias may be perceived as a factor which adversely affects the interest of the submitter, and prevents a fair and impartial assessment.

E. Conflicts of Interest raised by staff members

Do you support the recommendation to return conflict of interest notices?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	100.0%	12
No	0.0%	0

Comments

Yes, we support the return of the recommendations if sufficient justification for the conflict has not been provided.

The University of Waikato supports the SRG's proposal that notices assessed by the TEC as not meeting the definition of conflict be returned to the TEC. Waikato further recommends that a time period be formalised between a notice being received by the TEC and when the TEC must notify the TEO of its rejection.

On the matter of conflicts of interest raised by staff members, we expect that notice of a conflict are only raised via the staff member's TEO and applicability, or not, of the conflict is moderated at that point. When a conflict notice is raised the TEC should be required to respond stating whether the conflict was acknowledged as a major or minor or not considered a conflict, if this does not occur the staff member will be unclear as to the outcome. We assume a conflict notice resulting in a 'major conflict' would result in the conflicted panel member not being involved in the assessment of the staff member's portfolio.

Yes; it is important that staff members have the opportunity to raise potential conflicts of interest, but the process must be confidential and the criteria must be clear. Currently neither of these two criteria are completely fulfilled.

Confidentiality: the 2012 PBRF guidelines (which the SRG proposes not to change in this case) state that "The Chair will notify the panel member that a notice of conflict of interest has been received, giving the name of the PBRF-eligible staff member and the nature of the conflict". The University strongly recommends that the Chair is not obliged to talk to the relevant panel member about any such notices, but instead is permitted to use his or her own discretion to decide whether or not discussing the matter with the panel member is appropriate. If the Chair decides that such notification is desirable, the Chair should indicate to the staff member the intention to notify the panel member before doing so.

Clarity: There needs to be clear guidance about:

-Which potential conflicts of interest a staff member may raise

-Which potential conflicts of interest should instead be assumed to be already raised by the panel member (what does "exceptional circumstances" mean?)

-Which situations are not conflicts of interest - for example, professional differences of opinion.

The person/s raising the conflict of interest should have the opportunity to provide additional information if the initial notice is insufficient (within an appropriate timeframe).

Yes, but bias owing to differences of opinions should be considered conflict of interest.

F. Any other matters

Please describe and detail any areas or issues relating to peer review panel establishment or conflicts of interest that require our attention but have not already been included in the consultation paper.

In the past, the composition of the Creative and Performing Arts Panel has met with some open questions. Waikato would welcome some critical attention to looking at how to ensure that this panel is sufficiently broad and appropriate for the New Zealand practitioners and schools across the disciplines that it represents/assesses.

A final suggestion, again drawn from the UK REF, is that the panel review meetings are attended by independent 'Observers' as per the example set by the UK REF. The observers would be subject to the conflict of interest policy and their role would be to explicitly observe the behaviour of the Panel meetings to ensure equitable and un-biased input by members. This would be a supporting role to the moderators who are unlikely to be able to attend every meeting. While the Panel Chair may have panel behaviour and input as a component of their current role, their primary activity is managing or recording assessment actions rather than the sole task assigned to the Observers. Introduction of observers will add to the rigour of the assessment process and ensure the standards employed by the New Zealand PBRF assessment meet international standards.

We support the move towards wider representation on panels (eg early career researchers) and see this as a positive step.

We are concerned that individual scholars who believe that a panel member may have a reason to hold a negative conflict of interest against that scholar be allowed to declare that concern and the nature of the issue, for adjudication by the Chair and Moderator.

The "Panel member selection criteria" lists (Appendix 2) are misnamed, as they include panel member expectations (first bullet-pointed list) as well as selection criteria.

1. With reference to "the proposed statement for panel selection for the 2018 Quality Evaluation" (Sector Reference Group - Consultation Paper #5, p. 6).

Page 6, second bullet-point (current text): "an appropriate mix of new and previous panel members"

Proposed addition: "an appropriate mix of new and previous panel members (although no panel member should serve on more than two Quality Evaluation exercises)"

Rationale:

The present guidelines rightly refer to the need for a degree of continuity in the selection of panel members. There is no consideration, however, of the number of times a panel member may serve. This omission from the initial guidelines is understandable enough: the main aim twelve years ago was to get the PBRF exercise up and running. But now that it is an established feature of the NZ academic landscape, further consideration is required regarding the long-term composition of panels and their implications. While some continuity is highly desirable, the incorporation of fresh perspectives within panels is also important. A limit of two terms for individuals to serve on their panels seems a reasonable one; a panel member who serves for three consecutive terms in effect exerts an influence on disciplinary and institutional funding for eighteen years (more than half a career for most academics).

Appendix

Table 1: Proposed panel member profile matrix.

Ref	Panel member profile:	Subject Area requirement	Panel requirement	Chair requirement
1	Recognised expert	Minimum 2	Minimum 85%	All
2	Previous panel member	Minimum of 1	Minimum of 25%	50%
3	Applied/practice-based assessment expertise	Minimum of 1	Minimum of 2	Not necessary
4	Early career researcher	Nil	Nil. We strongly oppose the proposal that non-experts i.e. early career researchers, should be panel members	Nil
5	Interdisciplinary expertise		Proportion determined on interdisciplinary profile of Panel based on cross-referral volume from 2012 portfolios and advice from each Panel	Desirable, but not necessary
6	TEO member – representative of particular TEO	Preferred minimum of 1	Proportional representation of participating TEOs, proportion determined on total membership, not just each Panel	Desirable – proportional representation of participating TEOs
7	Non-TEO member	Minimum of 1	Minimum of 25%	Minimum of 1
8	Overseas/International	Minimum of 1	Minimum of 25%	Minimum of 1
9	Maori representation		Desirable	Desirable
10	Pasifika representation		Desirable	Desirable
11	Female	Preferred minimum of 1	Minimum of 40% (assuming this is feasible). Bare minimum is gender % of portfolios in subject in 2012	Minimum of 40% (assuming this is feasible)
12	Male		Balance of female count	Balance of female count

Notes:

Panel matrix item 4: The SRG paper suggests panel membership or representation of early career researchers. It is unclear if this is meant to mean panel membership by early career researchers or some other form of representation by proxy. If the former, actual membership, then we oppose this suggestion as this would contradict the notion of ‘high calibre members’.

Panel matrix item 6: Proportional representation by TEOs warrants reinforcing but appears to be happening already, for example Victoria University submitted around 10% of all funded evidence portfolios in 2012 and had around 10% of their staff as Panel members. Otago University by comparison appears over-represented on the Panels.

Panel matrix items 9 and 10: While these two groups have their own Panels, it is desirable to have representation on other Panels where possible.