

**Performance-Based Research Fund
Sector Reference Group review:
New and emerging researchers**

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Disclaimer:

This consultation paper has been prepared independently for the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) by the Sector Reference Group, an external group, as part of the review of the Performance-Based Research Fund. Although the TEC is facilitating this process, the consultation paper represents the independent views and suggestions of the Sector Reference Group, and does not necessarily represent the views of the TEC.

Performance-Based Research Fund Sector Reference Group Review: New and emerging researchers

1. Purpose

This paper has been prepared as part of the consultation process for the 2012 Performance-Based Research Fund (PBRF) assessment. The paper:

- identifies issues and concerns about the evaluation of new and emerging researchers in the PBRF quality assessment
- invites feedback from the Sector Reference Group (SRG) about these and any other issues felt to be relevant.

Areas of discussion not included in this paper

The SRG is considering a number of redesign issues for the PBRF 2012 Quality Evaluation and will prepare consultation papers on each. Where particular issues overlap between papers, they will only be discussed in one. This paper will discuss issues concerning the assessment of new and emerging researchers.

2. Aims and principles of the PBRF

In carrying out its role, the SRG will be guided by the aims and principles of the PBRF. The PBRF is designed to:

- increase the average quality of research
- ensure that research continues to support degree and postgraduate teaching
- ensure that funding is available for postgraduate students and new researchers
- improve the quality of information on research output
- prevent undue concentration of funding that would undermine research support for all degrees or prevent access to the system by new researchers
- underpin the existing sector strengths in tertiary education research.

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.
- *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.
- *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.

3. Principles of redesign

PBRF redesign work ahead of the 2012 Quality Evaluation will be based on the following principles and considerations:

- Upholding the aims and principles of the PBRF (outlined above).
- Learning from the first two Quality Evaluations in order to make improvements to the design of the PBRF and the implementation of the 2012 Quality Evaluation.
- Drawing on relevant experience and expertise across the tertiary education sector.
- Exposing proposed changes to rigorous sector and expert scrutiny.
- Achieving as much sector agreement as possible about how the next Quality Evaluation should be conducted.
- Avoiding costly or time-consuming changes unless there are good reasons for believing they will bring significant improvements.

4. Definition of new and emerging researchers

The category of new and emerging ("NE") researchers in New Zealand TEOs was defined by the TEC before the 2006 PBRF quality assessment round. They are staff with teaching and research responsibilities, either employed with such duties for the first time in their careers within the time frame of the research assessment period, or staff whose conditions of employment were changed to include research responsibilities during that period. They must meet the substantiveness test that applies to all staff eligible for assessment in the PBRF. The guidelines are a significant attempt to recognise and fund - through the PBRF - those new researchers on whom the long-term sustainability of research in New Zealand will depend.

Criteria for determining eligibility as a new and emerging researcher in 2006 were:

The staff member meets the requirements of the staff-participation criteria

AND

EITHER They were first appointed to a PBRF-eligible or equivalent position (whether in New Zealand or overseas, and whether in a TEO or non-TEO) on or after 1 January 2000

OR Their conditions of employment changed on or after 1 January 2000 to include a requirement to undertake research or degree-level teaching (ie. for the first time in their career).

A PBRF-eligible position would include a first appointment as, for example, Assistant Lecturer or Lecturer or a Postdoctoral Fellow, but would not include a short-term position or positions (of less than 12 months) as, for instance, a research assistant or tutor.

An equivalent position might also include appointment to a role at a non-TEO with employment functions that include research, eg. a Crown Research Institute. (Guidelines 2005, p.35)

4.1 New and emerging researchers: Background

In considering the potential negative effects of the PBRF, the Working Group involved in its design looked at the possible impacts on both new and emerging research areas and new and emerging researchers. Although it acknowledged that there could be morale problems among these researchers, the members of the group concluded that mechanisms to mitigate these potential risks might involve spreading limited resources too thinly.

“In recommending that the PBRF focus primarily on rewarding and encouraging excellence, the Working Group was explicitly recognising that the PBRF cannot be expected to meet the needs of both our top researchers and those who are just beginning their career.” (MOE/TTEC, 2002, p.33)

The Working Group considered that support and resources for beginning researchers would be best provided through other mechanisms.

Concerns were expressed by panels after the 2003 quality assessment that the assessment criteria could provide disincentives to staff who had recently completed a PhD, which required intensive concentration on research. Some of these staff were building a research platform but achieved an “R” quality category since they were unable to demonstrate sufficient peer esteem (PE) or contribution to research environment (CRE). “Such staff typically achieved the following score profiles: 1,2,2; 1.2.1; 1.1.2; 2,2,1; 2,1,2; or 2,2,2. Only the last of these score combinations more-or-less guaranteed that the staff member would receive a “C” rather than an R” (TEC, 2004b, p.18)

Report of the 2003 Quality Evaluation

The TEC's report on the 2003 assessment included in a list of issues for further deliberation "the assessment of new and emerging researchers and the possibility of creating a new quality assessment category to cover such staff" (TEC, 2004a, p.86).

The SRG recommended in its 2005 report that two additional quality categories be established to provide for specific recognition of "new and emerging" researchers, "C(NE)" and "R(NE)". "This allowed new and emerging staff who may not have had the chance to produce a track record of research, but have nevertheless produced recent research of high quality, the opportunity to attract funding for their institution" (Smart & Smyth, 2008, p.8).

4.2 The 2006 PBRF Quality Evaluation

Assessment of new and emerging researchers 2006

Evidence portfolios (EPs) from staff who met the criteria for new and emerging researchers could be assigned an "A", "B", "C(NE)" or "R(NE)" Quality Category. Those assigned an "A" or "B" category were required to meet the standards applying to all other staff members.

To be assigned a "C(NE)" category a staff members needed to provide evidence including

AT LEAST:

- 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 (TEC, 2005b, p.151).

The guidelines also stated:

"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 (ie. 2)."

New and emerging researchers were not required to provide evidence about PE and CRE (but were not prevented from doing so). Their quality evaluation could depend solely on the assessment of their Research Outputs.

EPs of new and emerging researchers that did not meet the standards set out above were assigned an "R(NE)" category. Some of these researchers may have included a masters thesis rather than a doctoral one, presented Nominated Research Outputs (NROs) without evidence of quality assurance, or fewer than four NROs. This would be insufficient for the award of a score of 2 for research output, which would be needed for the achievement of a "C(NE)" category.

4.3 Results of the quality assessment process 2006

The Moderation Committee report on the 2006 Quality Evaluation considered "the development of an assessment pathway specifically for new and emerging researchers was a very significant improvement to the assessment framework of the Quality Evaluation (TEC, 2007, p.284). This judgement was based on the significant number of new and emerging researchers whose research was acknowledged and recognised by the award of a funded research category in the 2006 PBRF assessment.

In the 2006 Quality Assessment 20.4 percent of all researchers (1,768 researchers) claimed "NE". However, there were considerable differences between subjects, from Physics with no "NE" researchers to Theatre and Dance, Film Television and Multimedia with 40.4 percent.

Almost half (46.7 percent) of "NE" staff received "C(NE)" scores, enabling them to achieve funded status. This figure equated to just over one quarter of all those who received a "C" quality category. However, this figure also masks major variation. In eight subjects (Earth Sciences, History, Human Geography, Chemistry and Ecology, Evolution and Behaviour) 80 percent or more of "NE" staff received "C(NE)" scores. In five other subjects (Nursing, Education, Veterinary Studies and large Animal Science, Design, Marketing and Tourism) fewer than 25 percent received a "C(NE)" category and in the case of Nursing and Education the figures were approximately 14 percent. (p.43). (Figures from Cinlar and Dowse, 2008).

Analysis of the results also indicated that the proportion of men and women awarded a "C(NE)" quality category was roughly equivalent (10 percent of total female staff and nine percent of all male staff entered in the PBRF in 2006). However, 16 percent of female researchers but only seven percent of male researchers received an "R(NE)" quality category (Cinlar and Dowse, 2008b, pp.16-17).

A higher proportion of Māori researchers, over a third, were "NE" staff compared with just over a fifth of all PBRF researchers and these staff were more likely to be lecturers than assistant lecturers (White & Grice, 2008, p.34). Of the Māori researchers who achieved a "C" quality category 26 percent received a "C(NE)" category, which is comparable to the 27.9 percent overall. However, within the "R" category, 44.7 percent Māori researchers were designated "R(NE)" compared with 32.4 percent of all researchers who received an "R" quality assessment (White & Grice, p.52).

An interesting feature was that almost a third of those receiving a "C(NE)" category in 2006 had participated in the PBRF in 2003. Indeed, 88 staff moved from a "C" to a "C(NE)" category.

4.4 Research scan

A research scan conducted by the TEC considered the primary question of what impact the PBRF had on new and emerging researchers, with subsidiary issues including support needed to enable these staff to become established quality researchers, the impact of the PBRF on their career aspirations, and whether changes have been made to policies and procedures to make the environment more supportive for these staff. (TEC 2006, p.15). Almost no material that directly addressed the impact of performance-based funding systems on new and emerging researchers was found, though there were discussions of issues facing these staff.

As part of his investigation for an independent review of the PBRF, Jonathan Adams conducted focus groups, some of which included with researchers. He also solicited further responses from researchers in the NE category at the end of his fieldwork phase when he sensed an imbalance in the categories of staff with whom he had contact. He notes:

“Unfortunately in many meetings I was told that the “NE” labelling remained problematic and that the assignment of a “C” grade was seen by rising stars to undermine morale and to stigmatise their position [. . .] Many interviewees referred to the impact that a “C” or even an “R” grade had on new research staff. Whatever the caveats applied to the reporting, the impact on the individual of being told they are only at “R” level is immense, and even a “C” grade is challenging to accept if it is then a label to be carried for the next six years. The “NE” label does not fully solve this problem.” (Adams, 2008, p.52)

Two focus groups, with participants drawn from a range of subject areas, were held in a New Zealand university as part of the preparation of this paper to probe issues raised by Adams. Participants’ responses revealed a lack of awareness of the guidelines for “NE” researchers and the difference between expectations for “NE” researchers and others who submitted portfolios. New researchers generally found the preparation of EPs daunting and time-consuming though institutional support was valued. While some suggested the grading system was crude, most appreciated receiving some assessment of their research performance. In fact, most suggested they would appreciate more detailed feedback, including automatic notification to individuals of their component and overall scores. They also suggested that clear and concise guidelines and exemplars, specifically prepared for new and emerging researchers, would be valuable. Current guidelines were seen as intimidating because of their bulk. No clear views about possible changes to the system, apart from those surrounding notification of results, were apparent. The focus group results indicated a problem with individual awareness of PBRF intentions and specific guidelines in 2006, which could militate against the research sustainability the process is designed to achieve.

Because the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) in the United Kingdom measures research quality at department rather than individual level, there is little research or information on its impact on new and emerging researchers. However, the RAE does require each department to supply a narrative that may include such areas as the research environment, recruiting and mentoring new staff, and strategies for involving them in research programmes. Evidence Ltd. drew attention to “a significant expansion in the tier of younger contract research staff. This has

knock-on consequences when there is no similar expansion in permanent posts, there is a poorly structured career development and there are problems of morale" (Evidence Ltd, 2006, p.28). The report draws attention to earlier work which found (in 2005) that early career researchers in the United Kingdom had a sense of grievance about poor tangible rewards and little career development or review.

5 Discussion of issues and concerns

The "NE" category was established because of concerns about the negative effects on young and emerging researchers who did not reach the threshold for a funded category in 2003 and the implications of this result on future research sustainability across the sector. Many of these staff had completed a doctoral degree during the assessment period but had not been able to develop PE or CRE. The SRG made a number of recommendations for change to incentivise such staff through the introduction of the new quality categories "C(NE)" and "R(NE)". The new policy was also designed to provide an incentive to TEOs to value and support these staff through the award of funding to accompany the "C(NE)" quality category. Nearly 1,000 of these researchers received a funded quality category. However, evidence from qualitative feedback (Adams, 2008) indicates that problems of morale among new researchers have not disappeared, even those who are considered rising stars.

The definition of "NE" researchers may need clarification as panels in 2006 reported a number of anomalies, both of researchers who appeared to fit the criteria for NE status but were not so listed, and others who appeared not to fit the criteria but were included. In some cases this affected the quality category awarded. (Some academics who could have achieved a "C(NE)" category were not included as "NE" and therefore could not be considered under that category). Specific examples raised were audited by TEC. In addition, focus groups held as part of the research for this paper indicated that "NE" researchers themselves did not appear to have a clear picture of what their status entailed. Some were surprised to be categorised as "NE". The Moderation Panel for the 2006 Quality Assessment, while acknowledging that the decision is one for a TEO to take, recommended that the TEC should consider reviewing and clarifying the eligibility criteria (TEC 2007 p.285) to eliminate the current ambiguities. The inclusion of specific job titles (Assistant Lecturer, Lecturer or Postdoctoral Fellow) with "NE" status could also have been misleading. Clarification could assist TEOs, their research managers and individual staff. It is also important that all involved in determining an individual's eligibility as an "NE" researcher should agree on the decision and that the EP should indicate this joint sign-off.

Given the participation of larger numbers of staff outside universities in the PBRF, it is likely that in the next quality assessment will have more staff claiming new and emerging status: established staff who have recently become research active, and staff recruited from senior industrial or professional careers, who have not established an individually assigned research record. If the PBRF is to encourage and provide incentives for all new and emerging researchers, it is important that its guidelines are inclusive and comprehensive. It is not clear that the current regulations benefit all of these staff. Indeed they appear to be most helpful to young researchers who have

recently completed a doctorate. Academics who see the guidelines as less helpful include those who embark on a doctorate in mid-career on top of full-time employment as academics and who may not complete it in a single PBRF time frame.

Feedback from academics classified as new and emerging researchers in the 2006 PBRF quality evaluation who took part in focus groups for this paper indicated that some felt their PE and CRE were irrelevant since it was possible to score a grade of "C" solely on the basis of a 2 for their research outputs. This trend was marked among those who had entered a TEO in mid-career with a substantial professional reputation that, in some cases, included substantial research involvement. In fact, the recommendations of the SRG in 2005 suggested that all academics be encouraged to complete the fields for PE and CRE in their Evidence Portfolios, and subject panels assessed the EPs from "NE" researchers in the same way as those of other academics. Indicating clearly in advice to TEOs and new and emerging researchers that these fields will be given the same consideration as the research output component will be important. However, the relative weightings in the scoring system (with 15 percent each given for PE and CRE) mean that it is probably impossible to gain a quality category of "C(NE)" without at least a 2 for the research output component.

The 2006 assessment criteria caused difficulties and dilemmas for several panels. The Report of the Moderation Panel was confident that assessment had been consistent and appropriate, but noted "some panels, however, did find the assessment criteria for "NE" researchers challenging to apply" (TEC 2007, p.285) and recommended that the TEC might find it useful to consider clarification. For those staff who submitted an EP with a PhD and two other quality assured outputs the assessment was straightforward. Other staff, whose research profiles were different, sometimes caused considerable debate among panels. The current guidelines state that the award of a "C(NE)" quality category requires:

- 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 (TEC, 2005b, p.151).

It is difficult to determine what research is equivalent to a PhD, even given the advice that such staff would submit more than three NROs. It may be that each panel needs to suggest specific guidelines to help both TEOs and staff and also to make their own task of assessment more manageable. In particular, panels may wish to examine whether a masters thesis should be allowed to count as an NRO for "NE" researchers. The term PhD also needs to be changed to doctorate to allow for the newer degrees now being awarded, such as an EdD, DJur, DHealth Studies, DClinPsych. Clarification of the impact of special circumstances such as a first PBRF eligible appointment only two years before the census date is also important. Focus groups suggested that the publication of exemplars might assist academic staff.

The need for institutions to demonstrate their support for “NE” staff is crucial. One of the aims of the PBRF is “to ensure that funding is available for postgraduate students and new researchers (TEC, 2004b, p.15). Cinlar & Dowse (2008) suggest that there should be a careful examination of the career paths of junior staff. Staff interviewed for this paper indicated strong support for mentoring and guidance. The funding that accompanies a quality category of “C(NE)” is an important incentive to TEOs to provide strategies for supporting new researchers. Increasing the weighting for those NE researchers who achieve a funded category could increase this incentive and encourage TEOs to employ new researchers.

Adams’ report indicates that some able young academics felt demoralised by the award of a “C(NE)” grade. Yet to achieve an “A” or “B” category “NE” researchers needed to fulfil all the requirements for that grade expected of staff that had much greater experience. They were being judged by a standard designed for top researchers with a history of large research grants, leading teams and international invitations, rather than by a standard appropriate to entrants into the research profession. The introduction of two new quality categories: “A(NE)” and “B(NE)” to recognise outstanding merit among particularly able new research staff would provide incentives to researchers and encouragement to TEOs to support these staff.

There was a considerable variation in experience among new and emerging researchers between those who completed a doctorate at the beginning of the assessment period and those who completed mid-way or later. While it is possible for an early completer to achieve sufficiently highly to be awarded an “A” or “B” category, a “C(NE)” may be a significant achievement for an academic with a recent doctorate. Compressing the period of eligibility from six to four years could create a more level playing field for “NE” researchers but would add greater complexity and uncertainty, requiring clear evidence of appointment, and provide further arbitrary dates for eligibility.

5.1 Possible options

Retain the status quo. Given the success of the introduction of the new and emerging researcher category, demonstrated by the award of funding to an increased number of academics who were unlikely to have achieved a “C” category under the 2003 regulations, it would be reasonable to make no changes. While this would be straightforward for TEOs and allow direct comparisons of results in 2006 and 2012, this option would not address any of the issues outlined in the paper above and thus is not recommended by the SRG.

Define conditions for “NE” researchers more clearly. Feedback from subject panels in 2006 indicated that there appeared to be inconsistencies in the TEO allocation of staff to the “NE” category. Feedback from focus groups for this paper indicated that a number of “NE” researchers were puzzled by or uncertain of the conditions for their status. The inclusion of specific academic positions (Assistant Lecturer, Lecturer, Postdoctoral Student) in the definition appeared to cause confusion. Not all those in these fields are “NE” researchers, while some senior lecturers may legitimately claim “NE” status. Clarifying the definition would assist both academics and TEOs. It would also give panels greater confidence that all evidence portfolios were correctly classified.

Some 2006 subject panels reported difficulty in applying the assessment criteria for “NE” researchers, particularly when the NROs presented in an evidence portfolio were not the recommended doctorate and two other quality assured publications. The SRG has some concern that if conditions were changed it could signal to the academic community that a doctorate is not regarded as an entry qualification in particular fields and that this would have the effect of lessening their status. However, it is possible for academics to establish a respectable research platform before completion of a PhD and these staff should not be disadvantaged. Requiring panels to develop more explicit definitions of what “equivalent to” the stated assessment criteria means in terms of research outputs will be an important step. In particular defining the tie-point between a 1 and a 2 for research output for new and emerging researchers is essential to provide greater clarity for panels in different disciplines in exercising professional judgement, and more assistance for academics and TEOs in completing EPs. Consistency between panels would need to be carefully monitored.

One of the aims of the PBRF is to provide support for new researchers and help develop capacity in the research sector. Providing a higher weighting for those new and emerging researchers awarded a funded quality category would enhance their value to their TEO and encourage TEOs to support new researchers. It would allow new researchers to feel appreciated and provide an incentive for them to focus on their research and complete an EP fully. The recommendation would alter the distribution of the PBRF funding and would increase the complexity of the calculations needed to translate quality scores into funding entitlements. This would be particularly so if recommendation 6 below was adopted.

New and emerging researchers are often highly visible within TEO departments as they may be the only academic in that category. In the focus groups a number of respondents indicated that other staff had quickly been able to work out their quality scores from the departmental profile. Removing the “NE” marker in reporting scores publicly would provide a greater level of anonymity. This would make direct comparisons with results in 2006 more difficult and would do nothing to remove the perceived stigma for rising stars of receiving a “C” quality category. The Adams report identified problems with the terminology but was not sure that removing the “NE” marker would solve the issues raised.

A feature identified by the Adams report was the demoralisation of some “NE” researchers on being awarded a “C(NE)” quality category. While a few “NE” academics were awarded a “B” or “A” category in 2006 others could not qualify for such a category as they had not achieved the necessary PE and CRE which had to be at the same level as that for researchers without “NE” status. Creating two new quality categories, “B(NE)” and “A(NE)” would provide incentive for “NE” researchers and allow more of them to achieve higher categories. The new categories would need to be carefully defined.

An alternative strategy would be to assess “N” & “E” researchers and award a funded quality category as at present but then report this result simply as “NE” while leaving those who do not reach the standard as “R(NE)”. High flyers would generate funding for their TEOs but would not suffer the stigma of a “C” grade.

The length of time during which researchers were able to claim “NE” status for the 2006 PBRF quality evaluation process varied from six full years to a few months. Those who achieved a “B” or “A” quality category had generally been employed as academics for most of the period whereas those who completed a doctorate in the second half of the assessment period had a much shorter time to establish a publication record. A further option would be to reduce the eligibility period from six years to four years. This would still assist the most recent appointees but provide incentives for new researchers to work at achieving PE and CRE.

Table 1: Options for changes to guidelines for assessment of new and emerging researchers

	Option	Advantages	Disadvantages
1.	Retain the status quo for new and emerging researchers	Makes comparisons with results in 2006 easier Means TEOs would not have to adjust to changes	Does not address issues arising from 2006 outlined in this paper
2.	Define conditions for eligibility for “N” & “E” status more clearly	Greater clarity for TEOs and academic staff Panels should feel a greater sense of certainty that academics are correctly identified	
3.	Require panels to develop more explicit definitions of what “equivalent to” the stated assessment criteria means in terms of research outputs and what would constitute a ranking of 2 for research outputs for new researchers	Greater clarity for panels in different disciplines Greater clarity for academics and TEOs in completing EPs	May lead to less consistency across panels Could lead to the assumption that a doctoral degree is not necessary as an entry qualification
4.	Provide a higher weighting for those “NE” researchers awarded a funded quality category	Provides incentives for TEOs to support emerging researchers and develop capacity Provides incentive for individual researchers	Increases complexity of calculations

5.	Assess "N" & "E" researchers according to guidelines but report a quality category without the "NE" marker	Helps the anonymity of "N" and "E" researchers when results are reported	More difficult to report comparisons between 2006 and 2012 Does nothing to reduce the demoralisation of a "C" category for rising stars
6.	Create two new quality categories, "B(NE)" and "A(NE)" with carefully defined requirements including PE and CRE appropriate to "NE" stage	Would provide incentives for rising stars Would encourage "NE" researchers to develop PE and CRE	Would make the system more complex Could lead to researchers moving from "A(NE)" to "B" or "B(NE)" to "C" in the next assessment and again being demoralised
7.	Assess "NE" researchers according to the current guidelines and award a funded quality category without the "NE" marker	Avoids demoralising "NE" researchers by the award of a "C" grade	Makes comparisons of results in 2006 and 2012 more difficult Could make distinguishing between "C(NE)" and "R(NE)" difficult Means that individual researchers who wish to receive a score are also disadvantaged
8.	Shorten the eligibility period for "NE" status from six to four years	Would provide incentives to those who complete doctorates early in the cycle to generate PE and CRE as they would be assessed in the general category	A four year term is as arbitrary as a six year term Could create greater complexity for TEOS and academics in determining eligibility for "NE" status

6 Recommendations and feedback

6.1 The SRG invites comment from the sector on the following recommendations.

The SRG recommends that the TEC revise and clarify the guidelines for eligibility for new and emerging researchers to ensure that TEOs are able to classify staff accurately.

The SRG recommends that individual panels be asked to debate and consult on the issue of the assessment guidelines for “N” and “E” researchers to define more clearly what “equivalent to a doctorate and two peer reviewed outputs” as a minimum requirement for NROs might entail so there is clear understanding of what a rating of 2 for research output means in this category.

The SRG recommends that the funding weightings for quality categories awarded specifically to “NE” researchers, currently “C(NE)”, be increased to provide incentives to new researchers and to TEOs in supporting them.

6.2 The SRG seeks further sector guidance on the following options:

Assessment of “NE” researchers according to the agreed criteria but reporting their quality categories without the “NE” marker.

Creation of two new quality categories, “B(NE)” and “A(NE)” with carefully defined requirements including PE and CRE.

Assessment of “NE” researchers according to the agreed criteria but reporting their quality categories as “NE” without a quality category marker.

Shortening the eligibility period for “NE” status from six to four years.

All feedback relating to this consultation paper on the PBRF special circumstance provisions should be emailed to: PBRF.2012Redesign@tec.govt.nz or can be posted to: Dr Damien Cole, Tertiary Education Commission, P O Box 27048, Wellington, 6141, to be received no later than 5pm, Friday, 23 January 2009.

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Performance-Based Research Fund

Feedback template
for

New and emerging researchers consultation paper

Feedback from:	
Contact details:	

1. Purpose

The purpose of this template is to provide a mechanism for collecting feedback on the matters raised as part of the PBRF Assessment Framework Consultation paper.

The objective is to obtain feedback in such a way that will speed the collation and review of feedback pertaining to specific areas of interest.

Respondents are encouraged to use this template to provide feedback, but should not feel limited in any way from providing comments in addition to those requested in the template.

Timeframe for feedback

1. Completed templates and any other comments should be emailed to PBRF.2012Redesign@tec.govt.nz or can be posted to Dr Damien Cole, Tertiary Education Commission, P O Box 27048, Wellington 6141.
2. Feedback would be appreciated as soon as possible, no later than 5pm, Friday, 23 January 2009.

2. Feedback

The SRG seeks further sector guidance on the following options:

- Assessment of “NE” researchers according to the agreed criteria but reporting their quality categories without the “NE” marker.
- Creation of two new quality categories, “B(NE)” and “A(NE)” with carefully defined requirements including PE and CRE.
- Assessment of “NE” researchers according to the agreed criteria but reporting their quality categories as “NE” without a quality category marker.
- Shortening the eligibility period for “NE” status from six to four years.