

**Performance-Based Research Fund
Sector Reference Group**

Terms of Reference

Background

The Performance-Based Research Fund (PBRF) is a key government initiative under the Tertiary Education Strategy (TES). It involves funding tertiary education organisations (TEOs) based on their research performance as determined by three measures:

- Research Quality;
- Research Degree Completions (RDC); and
- External Research Income (ERI).

Research quality is measured through periodic Quality Evaluations, in which Evidence Portfolios (EPs) of PBRF-eligible staff are independently assessed by peer review panels. This results in the assignment of individual quality categories (A, B, C, C(NE), R(NE) and R). The aggregated results, including quality scores (out of 10) and the distribution of quality categories for TEOs, subject areas, and nominated academic units, are publicly reported.

The results of the periodic Quality Evaluation, together with the results of the RDC and ERI measures, provide the basis for funding allocations to participating TEOs.

The Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) confirmed in February 2008 that the next PBRF Quality Evaluation will be held in 2012.

Role

The PBRF Sector Reference Group (SRG) will provide advice and recommendations to the TEC on what changes, if any, should be made to the design of the PBRF before the implementation of the 2012 Quality Evaluation.

This will involve:

- meeting regularly (via teleconference where necessary);
- reviewing any papers prepared as part of the TEC's PBRF redesign work, and undertaking further analysis as required;
- identifying options for resolving issues, and communicating these options in the form of discussion papers for sector feedback; and
- reviewing sector feedback and agreeing upon recommendations for TEC consideration.

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 outputs;
- prevent undue concentration of funding that would undermine research support for all degrees or prevent access to the system by new researchers; and
- underpin the existing sector strengths in tertiary education research.

The PBRF is governed by the following set of principles:¹

- **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; and

¹ These principles were first enunciated by the Working Group on the PBRF. See *Investing in Excellence*, pp.8-9.

- **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.

Process

The process the SRG follows in considering the design of the PBRF before the implementation of the 2012 Quality Evaluation will be as follows:

- SRG decides on topics for Issues Papers;
- preparation of Issues Papers for the SRG that give background information, specify the issues, and outline potential options for resolution;
- consideration of Issues Papers by the SRG (in terms of the quality of the analysis, accuracy, clarity, coverage of the relevant issues and options, and recommended approach);
- preparation of Consultation Papers for the sector providing background information, clarification of issues, analysis, and recommended approach;
- consultation with the sector and feedback;
- SRG recommendations made to the TEC;
- SRG receives feedback from TEC on recommendations; and
- if agreed by TEC, SRG recommendations are integrated into the PBRF guidelines (i.e. PBRF: A Guide for 2012).

At the conclusion of the PBRF redesign phase in June 2010, an updated guide for the 2012 Quality Evaluation will be issued, containing the integrated redesigned process.

The following indicative timeline is proposed:

Stage	Time	Activity
Stage I Sector Reference Group, Redesign, and Guidelines	Sep 2007	• Sector Reference Group Chair appointed
	7 Feb 2008	• Call for nominations for Sector Reference Group members
	1 Mar 2008	• Nominations for Sector Reference Group close
	14 Mar 2008	• Sector Reference Group announced
	28 Mar 2008 to Jun 2010	• Redesign work begins, including consultation with sector and overseen by a Sector Reference Group
	Jul 2010	• Final EP Form and Guidelines available to TEOs
Stage II TEOs internal process	Jul 2010 to Jul 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build information systems and operational processes • Staff prepare EPs

	14 Jun 2012	• Census Date
Stage III Quality Categories assigned to EPs and Audit processes	21 Jul 2012	• EPs submitted to TEC
	28 Aug 2012	• Panels receive EPs for assessment
	27 Nov – 8 Dec 2012	• Panels meet to assign Quality Categories
	Dec 2012/ Jan 2013	• Panel Results moderated
Stage IV Reporting, Complaints and Funding	Feb 2013	• TEC Board approves results
	Apr 2013	• 2006 Public Report published
	Apr 2013	• Funding delivered to TEOs
	Apr/May 2013	• Complaints process
Stage V	May 2013 to Jun 2013	• Completion and review

Principles of Redesign

PBRF redesign work ahead of the 2012 Quality Evaluation will be based on a number of 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; and
- avoiding costly or time-consuming changes unless there are good reasons for believing they will bring significant improvements.

Membership

Membership of the SRG is as follows:

Name	Position	Nominating TEO
Susan Cauchi	Director Academic	Whitireia Community Polytechnic
Dr Cathy Coleborne	Senior Lecturer in History	University of Waikato

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Professor Marston Conder (Vice Chair)	Co-Director of NZ Institute of Mathematics and its Applications	University of Auckland
Professor Olaf Diegel	Director of the Creative Industries Research Institute	AUT University
Dr Grant Duncan	Senior Lecturer, Social and Public Policy Programmes at Massey University	Association of University Staff
Robin Falconer	General Manager – Research at GNS Science - Te Pu Ao	Invited by Chair and TEC
Professor Jane Harding	Acting Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research)	University of Auckland
Professor John Hattie (Chair)	Director of Visible Learning Laboratories and asTTle at the University of Auckland	Invited by TEC
Jonathan Hughes	Senior Policy Advisor NZVCC	New Zealand Vice-Chancellors' Committee
Professor Pare Keiha	Pro Vice-Chancellor for Māori Advancement and Tumuaki of Te Ara Poutama, the Dean of the Faculty of Māori Development	AUT University
Professor Gael McDonald	Vice President Research	Unitec New Zealand
Professor Kay Morris Matthews	Research Professor	Eastern Institute of Technology
Professor John Raine	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Auckland & International)	Massey University
Dr John Smart	Director Research Management	University of Auckland
Professor Ian Town	Deputy Vice Chancellor	University of Canterbury
Professor Geoff White	Professor of Psychology Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research)	University of Otago

An important principle guiding the work of the SRG is that, while its members are drawn from a wide range of participating TEOs, their role is not to act as representatives for their respective organisations. If a member of the SRG is unable to attend a meeting, then there is to be no proxy for that member at the meeting.

SRG members have been selected according to their ability to:

- contribute to discussions on the basis of their expertise and experience;
- contribute to the development of advice through peer review and, by agreement, produce working papers within their field of expertise;
- maintain confidentiality where required;

- canvas proposals widely within their network of contacts in the sector; and
- work with other SRG members to make recommendations regarding redesign issues to the PBRF Steering Group.

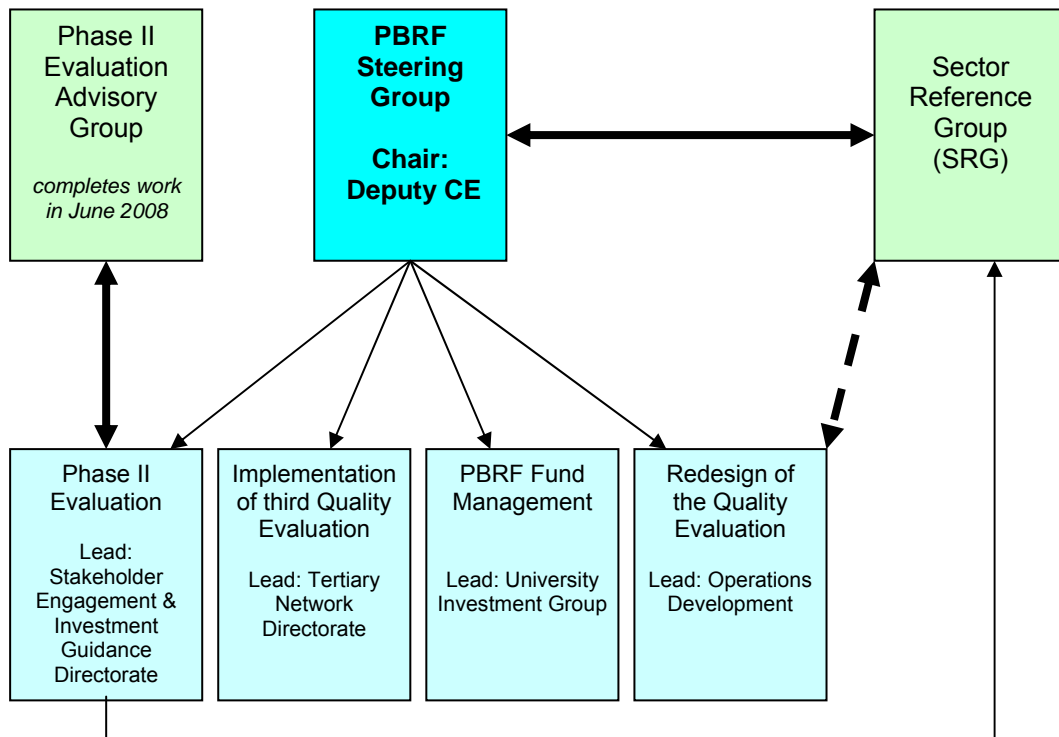
In selecting the membership of the SRG, consideration has also been given to:

- representing an appropriate range of participating TEOs;
- having an appropriate balance in terms of gender, race, and ethnicity;
- having the knowledge and expertise necessary to provide informed, dispassionate, and reliable advice;
- representing an appropriate range of academic disciplines and academic research managers;
- including academic staff at different points in their careers; and
- including some members with a non-academic research background.

The SRG will be supported by TEC staff from the Operations Development team, and across the organisation.

Location in Project Structure

The place of the SRG in the TEC's PBRF project structure is set out below:



Reimbursement of Costs

The TEC will either book, or reimburse (on presentation of appropriate receipts) travel costs associated with attendance at SRG meetings.

In the event that specific activities require additional work from any of the SRG members, the TEC will agree a contract with the member concerned to cover payment for the agreed services.

Confidentiality

Members of the SRG will be receiving papers covering issues, background information, and suggested changes to the design of the PBRF. These papers may at times include potentially contentious issues and analysis as the SRG must have all relevant data for them to effectively consider and communicate issues freely and frankly.

It is essential that the papers provided to the SRG, and any subsequent SRG discussions, remain confidential to the Group, at least until such time as revised papers are circulated for wider sector consultation.

So as to ensure free and frank discussion, no detailed minutes will be kept of discussions at SRG meetings. However, a record will be kept of decisions and action points.

Approval

The SRG approved these terms of reference on 28 March 2008.