Tertiary Education Report: Release of the 2018 PBRF Quality Evaluation Results

Date:	23 April 2019	TEC priority:	Medium
Security level:	In Confidence	Report no:	B-19-00527
		Minister's office No:	

ACTION SOUGHT

	Action sought	Deadline
Hon Chris Hipkins Minister of Education **Hon Jenny Salesa** Associate Minister of Education	**note** that on 30 April 2019 the Tertiary Education Commission will release the interim results of the 2018 Performance-Based Research Fund (PBRF) Quality Evaluation. **note** we are consulting with Minister Salesa's office on a press release for the 30 April release. **note** the assessment process used to determine the results has been subject to external and internal audit processes that have provided the TEC with confidence in the outcome. **note** that based on the Quality Evaluation assessment framework, the results show research quality increased between the 2012 and 2018 rounds, and includes noticeable shifts in demographics and subject areas. **note** that the TEC has changed its approach to reporting the results for the 2018 Quality Evaluation round, and has produced a suite of information products designed to make the results more accessible. **note** that the interim results report, *Improving Research Quality,* which will be published on 30 April, is attached. **agree** that the TEC release this briefing in full after the release on 30 April.	
Enclosure: Yes	**Round Robin: No**	

CONTACT FOR TELEPHONE DISCUSSION (IF REQUIRED)

Name	Position	Telephone		1st contact
Gillian Dudgeon	Deputy Chief Executive, Delivery	Section 9(2)(a)	████████	✓
Section 9(2)(a)	PBRF Reporting Workstream Lead	Section 9(2)(a)		

THE FOLLOWING DEPARTMENTS/AGENCIES HAVE SEEN THIS REPORT

☐ DPMC ☐ MPI ☐ ENZ ☐ ERO ☐ MBIE ☐ MoE ☐ MFAT

☐ MPP ☐ MSD ☐ NZQA ☐ NZTE ☒ TEC ☐ TPK ☐ Treasury

Minister's Office to Complete: ☐ Approved ☐ Declined

☐ Noted ☐ Needs change

☐ Seen ☐ Overtaken by Events

☐ See Minister's Notes ☐ Withdrawn

Comments:

Recommendations

Hon Chris Hipkins, Minister of Education and **Hon Jenny Salesa**, Associate Minister of Education

It is recommended that you:

1. **note** that on 30 April 2019 the Tertiary Education Commission will release the interim results of the 2018 Performance-Based Research Fund Quality Evaluation;

2. **note** we are consulting with Minister Salesa's office on a press release for 30 April release;

3. **note** the assessment process used to determine the results has been subject to external and internal audit processes that have provided the TEC with confidence in the outcome;

4. **note** that based on the Quality Evaluation assessment framework**,** the results show research quality increased between the 2012 and 2018 rounds, and includes noticeable shifts in demographics and subject areas;

5. **note** the TEC has changed its approach to reporting the results for the 2018 Quality Evaluation round, and has produced a suite of information products designed to make the results more accessible;

6. **note** the interim results report, which will be published on 30 April, is attached; and

7. **agree** that the TEC release this briefing in full after the release on 30 April.

Minister of Education **AGREED / NOT AGREED**	**Associate Minister of Education** **AGREED / NOT AGREED**

Gillian Dudgeon

Deputy Chief Executive, Delivery
Tertiary Education Commission

23 April 2019

Hon Chris Hipkins	**Hon Jenny Salesa**
Minister of Education	Associate Minister of Education
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Purpose

1. The purpose of this briefing is to provide you with:

    a. the processes undertaken to ensure the integrity of the Performance-Based Research Fund (PBRF) 2018 Quality Evaluation results;

    b. an overview of the results of the 2018 Quality Evaluation; and

    c. the TEC's approach to the release of these results on 30 April 2019.

2. The interim results report, *Improving Research Quality,* has been attached for your consideration.

Background

3. The PBRF Quality Evaluation is one of New Zealand's largest research assessment exercises. The Quality Evaluation is a periodic review of research quality which determines 55% of the total amount of funding allocated through the PBRF[1] . That equates to just over $1 billion of $1.8 billion available over the six-year PBRF funding period.

4. Previous Quality Evaluations were held in 2003, 2006[2] and 2012. For the 2018 Quality Evaluation, 36 tertiary education organisations (TEOs) participated, up from 27 in 2012.

5. For the 2018 Quality Evaluation, we brought together 266 panellists across 13 peer-review panels to assess 8,269 staff Evidence Portfolios (EPs). Between 19 November and 7 December 2018 all 13 panels met in Wellington to assign final Quality Categories (ratings) to each Evidence Portfolio (EP).

6. As noted in our briefing to Minister Salesa in February 2019, the TEC has changed the way it reports on the results of the Quality Evaluation. We have prepared a suite of outputs designed to give greater meaning, transparency and accessibility to the results.
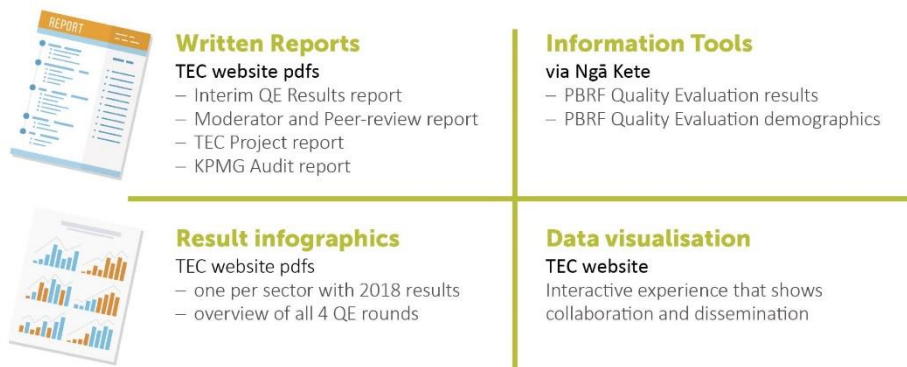
Release of the results on 30 April 2019

7. All participating TEOs have been notified that the results will be publicly released on Tuesday, 30 April 2019. The following publications will also be released:

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[1] The other two components of the PBRF are Research Degree Completions (25% of funding) and External Research Income (20% of funding).
[2] 2006 was a partial round and TEOs had the option of carrying over results from 2003 or submitting new Evidence Portfolios (EPs) for assessment.

Overview of reporting outputs

Written Reports
TEC website pdfs
– Interim QE Results report
– Moderator and Peer-review report
– TEC Project report
– KPMG Audit report

Information Tools
via Ngā Kete
– PBRF Quality Evaluation results
– PBRF Quality Evaluation demographics

Result infographics
TEC website pdfs
– one per sector with 2018 results
– overview of all 4 QE rounds

Data visualisation
TEC website
Interactive experience that shows collaboration and dissemination

8. Additionally, the TEC will publish interactive charts that the public can use to see results by TEO, subject area and demographics. These mimic the more detailed information tools available only to TEOs through TEC's Ngā Kete data portal.

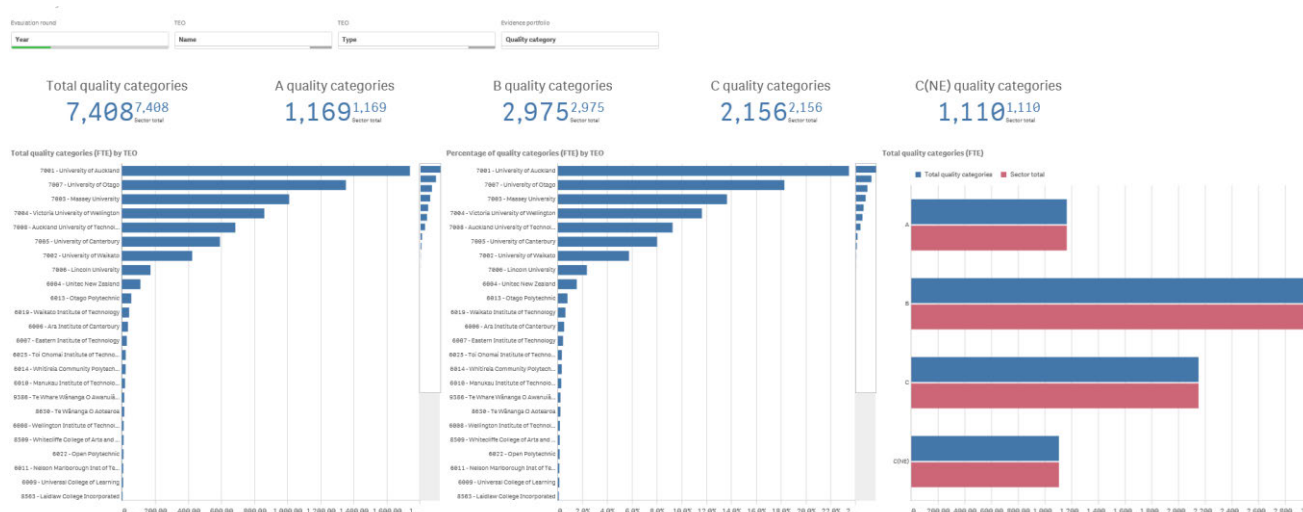9. Each TEO will receive their individual results 24 hours prior to the public release (i.e.on Monday, 29 April 2019).

The TEC has confidence in the results…

10. The TEC included a number of key design aspects in the process of implementing the 2018 Quality Evaluation which provides confidence in the results.

11. Following the 2012 Quality Evaluation round, the TEC convened a sector reference group (SRG) to assist us in implementing changes recommended by a Ministry of Education review of the 2012 round. The recommendations of the SRG informed detailed guidelines published in June 2016, well in advance of the 2018 round, to allow adequate time for TEOs to prepare for the process. Out of this, a governance group, formed in July 2016, was tasked with monitoring progress, committing the appropriate levels of resource, monitoring the risk management plan and resolving major issues. The group is chaired by Emeritus Professor, Ian Town, who was also the Chair of the SRG, along with key members of the TEC's senior leadership.

12. Strong governance and the consultative nature of the process were combined with a process assurance framework which incorporated multiple checks and balances. These relate to the roles of TEOs, panellists and the TEC. A specific example of this is the moderation process, which is designed to promote systematic reflection on the issues of consistency, standards and cross-panel assessment. The outcome is a highly robust process designed to ensure the integrity of the results.

13. The results were also underpinned by two independent audit process. The TEC contracted KMPG to audit TEO's submission processes and data quality, and Cook & Associates Limited to audit the TEC's administration of the Quality Evaluation.

14. KPMGs final report, which will be published with the 2018 Quality Evaluation results, states, "Overall, we conclude that the PBRF guidelines have been consistently and correctly applied by all participating tertiary education organisations. Although we identified some instances where TEOs had not correctly applied the PBRF guidelines, these instances have been corrected and we are confident that our auditing procedures have identified the majority of errors".

15. Cook & Associates Limited found that the assessment of Evidence Portfolios was in accordance with the assessment framework. As such, the results of the 2018 Quality

Evaluation provide a fair reflection of the quality of research being undertaken across the tertiary sector. A letter to this affect can be found in Appendix 4 of the interim results report, *Improving Research Quality.*

… but some TEOs may be disappointed

16. While the process was robust, the release of the results may leave some TEOs disappointed. The agreed approach to reporting focusses on the results at a system level. We have intentionally moved away from the previous reporting approach, which deliberately ranked TEOs against each other using the average quality score measure.

17. A key change has been the decision made after the 2012 review to focus on reporting measures related to research intensity as opposed to research quality. The two measures chosen to do this compare the number of funded Quality Categories to the total number of staff at degree level or higher at each TEO (the AQS(S)) or in relation to postgraduate learners (the AQS(E)). We will report these measures by listing TEO's results in alphabetical order as described in the PBRF Guidelines.

18. Whilst each TEO will still be able to see their results by funded Quality Category (i.e. A, B, C and C(NE) there will no longer be an overall quality measure for each TEO. Two new easy-to-use information tools or Qlik Applications have been developed to increase the utility of the results while focussing on the growth of research quality in New Zealand. An example of how material will be presented is set out below:

Universities continue to receive the bulk of the funding

19. The inclusion of nine additional non-university research organisations in 2018 has only resulted in a small increase in the portion of funding received by the Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics (ITPs), Private Training Establishments (PTEs) and Wānanga.

20. The universities will continue to attract the bulk of the PBRF funding in 2019 (95.66% of Quality Evaluation funding and 97% of all PBRF funding). Outside of the university sector, only Unitec New Zealand will receive greater than 1.0% of the total funding available through the PBRF (as was the case in the 2012 Quality Evaluation).

21. Indicative funding allocations for each participating TEO can be found in Appendix 3 of the interim results report, *Improving Quality*. The table below shows you shifts between 2012 and 2018 by sector:

Sector	2012 QE Review Results			2018 QE Review Results			Change in Allocation
	# of TEOs	QE Ratio	QE Allocation	# of TEOs	QE Ratio in 2018	QE Allocation (indicative)	
University	8	96.7%	$167,519,809	8	95.66%	$165,728,915	-1%
ITP	10	3.0%	$5,183,168	14	3.62%	$6,284,438	+21%
PTE	8	0.23%	$394,700	12	0.52%	$909,208	+130%
Wānanga	1	0.09%	$152,323	2	0.19%	$327,439	+115%
	27		$173,250,000	36		$173,250,000	

22. While overall funding is still similar to 2012 levels there have been some changes for the Quality Evaluation funding for individual universities:

   a. Auckland University of Technology (AUT) and Victoria University of Wellington will increase their total Quality Evaluation funding. AUT's additional funding is the result of a 60.5% increase in funded Evidence Portfolios, from 429.47 in 2012 to 689.23 (figures are FTE-weighted) in 2018.

   b. The University of Canterbury and Massey University have the largest percentage point decreases across the university sector in their Quality Evaluation ratio, down 1.4 and 1.1 percentage points respectively.

23. The University of Auckland (29.8%) and the University of Otago (19.8%) dominate the overall funding allocations, showing significant levels of achievement in all three components of the PBRF. These two universities will receive 48.4% of Quality Evaluation funding, 47.1% of Research Degree Completion funding and 56.2% of External Research Income funding.

The results show an increase in research quantity and quality

24. While funding is important it is only part of the story. As in previous rounds, results from the 2018 Quality Evaluation, based on the assessment framework, show an overall growth in research quality across the tertiary education sector, particularly in the percentage point increase in the award of A Quality Categories.

25. In 2018, about 56% of researchers' Evidence Portfolios have been assigned an A or B Quality Category[3] – compared with 53% in 2012. Between 2012 and 2018 the number of researchers awarded an A Quality Category increased by 39.8%, while growth in the number of B Quality Categories awarded to researchers increased by 17.5%.

26. There has been growth across certain panels and subject areas:

   a. The Medicine and Public Health Panel and Māori Knowledge and Development Panel had the largest percentage increases in funded Evidence Portfolios, up 40.8% and 39.0%[4] from 2012 respectively.

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[3] A and B Quality Categories are the two highest Quality Categories awarded. For example, an A Quality Category would be awarded when there is evidence the research quality meets a world-class standard.
[4] The small volume of EPs submitted to the Māori Knowledge and Development panel should be considered when interpreting this figure. In 2012, 125.83 researcher EPs were assigned a funded Quality Category compared with 174.87 in 2018.

b. The inaugural Pacific Research Panel was held in 2018. The panel assigned funded Quality Categories to 54.61 EPs. These EPs were slightly more likely to be assigned an A and B Quality Category, with 53.7% falling into either category.

c. The subject areas with the greatest increase in total funded Quality Categories were Biomedical (64.5%), Nursing (40.0%) and Engineering and Technology (33.1%). This is partially the result of the high number of new staff who participated for the first time in 2018.

We also know more about who the researchers are

27. For the first time the 2018 results will include researcher demographic data[5]. The following insights from the data highlight both important gains and areas where additional work is required to increase diversity of the New Zealand research workforce.

28. The 2018 Quality Evaluation saw greater gender parity, with women making up 42.9% of funded researchers or 3,180.13, up from 38.8% or 2,449.53 in 2012. Women were awarded slightly more C(NE)[6] Quality Categories with men more likely to receive an A or B Quality Category.

29. There was also a modest increase in new and emerging researchers in 2018, with 1,315.41 new and emerging staff receiving a funded Quality Category, 17.8% of the total. Of these, 45.2% identified as European, 4.1% were Māori and 1.7% were Pacific Peoples. While most of these researchers received a C(NE), 7.3% were awarded an A or B Quality Category.

30. In general, the typical New Zealand researcher who participated in the 2018 Quality Evaluation was European (60.9%), male (56.6%), not new and emerging (82.2%), and between 40 to 49 years of age (28.5%) followed closely by those between 50 to 59 years of age (27.7%).

31. The demographics change slightly when we break this down by funded Quality Category. Looking at researchers who received an A Quality Category, in general, these were men (68.3%), European (69.2%) and aged between 50 and 59 (37.9%).

Looking to the future

32. As the results show, to date there is much to celebrate in terms of the New Zealand research landscape and the quality of research it produces. While the future of the PBRF will be determined by the Ministry of Education's upcoming review of the fund, the results indicate two areas for consideration.

33. *The first is the sustainability of higher funded Quality Categories.* A healthy research ecosystem needs a mix of researchers who are producing ground breaking research with those who are just beginning their research careers and may not have reached their peak yet. If the same cohort of researchers continue to participate in the Quality Evaluation, the demographic trend indicates an ageing workforce that is not being replenished at a fast enough rate by younger researchers. Should there be another Quality Evaluation, we may see a drop in the number of researchers awarded an A or B Quality Category.

34. *The second also relates to the researcher workforce.* The growth in Māori and Pacific researchers has been slow to static. Anecdotal evidence from Māori and Pasifika panellists

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[5] Our new approach necessitated tidying up older data sets to ensure these were robust and this enabled the publication of demographic data. Like all of our outputs, the demographic information only includes researchers that received a funded Quality Category.

[6] The C(NE) Quality Category is awarded to those who are considered new and emerging. New and emerging researchers are usually post-graduate or post-doctoral learners or those moving from industry to academia who are just starting out in their research careers.

indicates this is partially the result of recruitment and promotion practices within TEOs. Panellists also indicated that these researchers have less time to focus on producing research outputs. Often they have a variety of other commitments that contribute to the research environment, but are not as highly weighted in the Quality Evaluation as, for example, a published journal article in a world-class outlet.

35. The latter concern has been noted by the Moderation Panel in its recommendations to the TEC. We will share these with the Ministry of Education and work with them on addressing these concerns as part of the review.

New approach to communicating the results to TEOs and publicly

36. After the Ministry of Education's review of the PBRF following the 2012 Quality Evaluation, Cabinet agreed a range of policy and operational changes. This included strengthened reporting on research performance by using fewer measures. The aim was to ensure robust and meaningful comparisons between TEOs and across rounds.

37. Key changes made are:

    a. The TEC has moved away from 300+ page reports to shorter easier to read reports supported by a range of business information tools which are designed to give meaning to the results beyond the previous emphasis on TEO rankings.

    b. The new Qlik applications will be available via the TEC data portal - Ngā Kete: one on the results of all Quality Evaluation rounds and the other on researcher demographics. We have also made a greater level of information publicly available.

    c. These tools are complemented by four subsector infographics and one that shows the PBRF across all four rounds, and data visualisations that show collaboration and dissemination channels of certain research output types.

38. We released the two Qlik applications with historical data in October 2018 to test the usability and usefulness of the information provided. Feedback was positive, with respondents noting the intuitive and ease of using the applications.

39. We are continuing to work with TEOs to ensure a seamless transition and making sure they understand where to access the most salient information on the 30 April 2019. This informs a key part of our communications plan developed for the release.

40. We will also release interactive charts to allow the public to see the results by TEO and subject area, and demographic information.

Consultation

41. We will provide the reporting outputs to the Ministry of Education to assist them in preparing for the Review of the PBRF that is scheduled to commence in mid-2019, following the release of the 2018 Quality Evaluation results. We are working with the Ministry of Education on the upcoming review of the PBRF. This includes discussing how we can help to support the review panel.

42. The TEC will also provide relevant government agencies with links to the reporting outputs on the 30 April and host a debrief with the Ministry of Education on release day to discuss the results in more detail.

Conclusion

43. The TEC will publicly release the interim results of the 2018 Quality Evaluation on Tuesday, 30 April. We will provide individual TEOs with their results 24 hours prior to this release to allow them time to prepare any media statements.

44. Our communications team are consulting with Minister Salesa's office on a possible press release. We will work with the Minister's office to coordinate release times as needed.

45. After the interim results are released, the 95 day period to process complaints begins. In 2012, 41 complaints were submitted of which two were either upheld or partially upheld.

46. Once the complaints process is completed, a further report will be provided to you on any changes made to funding as a result of this process.