Performance-Based Research Fund
Sector Reference Technical Sub-group:
Consultation paper #10 – Review of the technical specifications for the 2018 Quality Evaluation information technology system

Sector feedback and TEC recommendations

Purpose

The Performance Based Research Fund (PBRF) Sector Reference Group (SRG) sought feedback on the following technical documents:

- Evidence Portfolio schema definition
- Evidence Portfolio template
- Evidence Portfolio XSD and XML sample files
- Staff Data File specification

This document provides:

- a summary of the responses received;
- details on any concerns raised relating to the technical specifications; and
- the Tertiary Education Commission's (TEC's) recommendations on each aspect of the feedback sought.

Introduction

Consultation paper #10 – Review of the technical specifications for the 2018 quality evaluation information technology system provided the sector and other key stakeholders with the details of changes required to the IT system and invited feedback on the proposed changes and any other matters not raised in the paper.

Feedback on this consultation paper was invited through the TEC from 13 July to 21 August 2015. Consultation has now closed.

A total of 12 responses were received. These were from:

- Auckland University of Technology
- Christchurch Polytechnic Institute of Technology
- Eastern Institute of Technology
- Lincoln University
- Massey University
- Otago Polytechnic
- University of Auckland
- University of Canterbury
- University of Otago
- University of Waikato
- Victoria University of Wellington
- 1 individual staff member

The Ministry of Education also provided minor comments on the EP schema document.

Process information

This document summarises the feedback and presents the TEC's recommendations. These recommendations will be considered by the SRG's Technical sub-group before being updated and presented to the SRG for final decisions.

Organisation of summary

Each of the 12 responses has been analysed. Feedback is summarised according to the following sections:

A. Evidence Portfolio Schema
B. Staff data file specification
C. Any other matters

A. Evidence Portfolio Schema

EP structure

1. Do you support the changes to the structure of EPs to be submitted to the 2018 Quality Evaluation?

	Response #
Yes	10
No	2

There was support in general for the changes to the EP structure, most of which are required to support the decisions already made or pending.

There were comments regarding the personal data that panel members see when assessing an EP and there needs to be more communication to confirm that date of birth is not visible, however Title, Name and TEO are required to assist with identifying conflicts of interest.

One response that was against the change was in the context of not wanting any change which would indicate a lack of understanding as to why the changes are required.

Recommendation

Adopt the EP structure as documented but note that further changes are likely until the PBRF QE 2018 Guidelines are completed.

2. Do you support the rounding of data elements (e.g. 2048 rounded to 2000, 1024 rounded to 1000, 255 rounded to 250)?

	Response #
Yes	7
Yes (conditional)	2
No	3

Two responses against the change were due to not wanting to change existing systems and thought that the benefit of the rounding was minor. The other response against the rounding down would prefer rounding anything at half or above to be rounded up. e.g. 2048 rounded to 2050.

The conditional responses were related to requesting the Contextual Narrative be increased from 2,000 to 2,500 characters, and noting that the Research Contribution Description field should be 1500 characters as stated in the “in principle” decision.

Recommendation

Round maximum character lengths down as per the EP schema definition with the following exceptions:

- *The Platform of Research – Contextual Narrative is rounded up from 2048 to 2500 characters*
- *the Research Contribution Description field will be 1500 characters as per the “in principle” decision from Consultation paper #3*

Researcher details

3. Do you agree that default date of birth (as used in the NSI) cannot be used and will result in a validation error for the EP?

	Response #
Yes	6
No	6

There was a mix of responses to this question. Feedback indicates that some TEOs do not collect date of birth data and some staff choose not to provide this information. Other TEOs have indicated no difficulty with collecting this data.

It is recommended that default dates of birth continue to be used in the NSN but TEOs will be encouraged to correct the NSI record where they do have the researcher’s actual date of birth.

The use of the default date of birth will not result in a validation error for the EP, but a mismatch between the EP and the NSN will.

If actual date of birth is not collected the issue for validating researchers requesting their own EP results will still exist and use of NSN plus EP number alone will be sufficient.

Recommendation

Allow use of the default date of birth and continue to apply the validation rule to match the date of birth in the EP with that in the NSN. A mismatch will result in a validation error for the EP which must be resolved before the EP is released for assessment.

Use of the NSN and EP number will be sufficient for the TEC to validate the identity of a researcher requesting their own EP results if the default date of birth has been used.

4. Do you accept the change for middle name to be entered into one element?

	Response #
Yes	12
No	0

There was unanimous support for this proposal with no issues raised.

Recommendation *Enter Middle name into one element.*

Panel details

5. Do you support reducing the character limit of the Field of Research Description element to 500?

	Response #
Yes	12
No	0

There was unanimous support for this proposal with no issues raised.

Recommendation *Reduce the Field of Research Description element to 500 characters*

6. Do you agree with the proposed structure for the MaoriResearch and PacificResearch elements?

	Response #
Yes	9
No	2
No response	1

There was strong support for this proposal with feedback indicating a lack of understanding of the purpose of the section in one negative response, while the remaining negative response related to more of a policy issue with cross-referrals to these two panels.

Recommendation *Adopt the proposed structure for the MaoriResearch and PacificResearch elements.*

Nominated research output

7. Do you support the addition of explicit information to identify the link or physical location of the main research object?

	Response #
Yes	11
No	1

There was strong support for this proposal. One TEO raised internal issues which are outside the scope of this proposal.

Recommendation
Add explicit information to identify the link or physical location of the main research object.

8. Do you agree with the renaming of MyContribution to IndividualContribution?

	Response #
Yes	9
No	3

The responses against this proposal were either against change in principle or noted that a change of field title will not resolve the real issue which is how to obtain clarity around a co-author's contribution to a research output.

AUT responded "We believe this label will do nothing to address the issue raised and so should not be changed. We suggest guidance be provided with percentage contributions discouraged. Some journals now require the contribution of each co-author to be described and we suggest the format provided by leading journals inform development of material. Within our TEO we have developed detailed material and would be happy to advise on this material if requested".

Recommendation
Rename MyContribution to IndividualContribution.

9. Do you have suggestions for guidelines for describing individual contribution?

The suggestions are listed in the following table.

It is recommended that the TEC consider all these suggestions and draft guidelines to better describe individual contribution for co-authors.

Respondent	Suggestion
AUT	Some journals now require the contribution of each co-author to be described, e.g. PLOS ONE or Nature Group. We suggest the format provided by leading journals inform development of material. Within our TEO we have developed detailed material and would be happy to advise on this material if requested. Suggested sources for developing guidance on author contribution include: International Committee of Medical Journal Editors http://www.icmje.org/recommendations/browse/roles-and-responsibilities/defining-the-role-of-authors-and-contributors.html Nature Group http://www.nature.com/authors/policies/authorship.html An example from the *Journal of Biological Chemistry:* (http://www.jbc.org/site/misc/ifora.xhtml#contributions) Author contributions Statement describing each author's contributions to the manuscript. Authorship credit should be based on the following: Acquisition of funding, collection of data, or general supervision of the research group alone does not constitute authorship. Corporate authorship is not accepted. substantial contributions to conception and design, acquisition of data, or analysis and interpretation of data; drafting the article or revising it critically for important intellectual content; final approval of the version to be published Review the Authorship criteria section of the JBC Editorial Guidelines. Identify each author by his or her initials, as in these examples: *Example 1*: PFG conceived and coordinated the study and wrote the paper. AKR and JRG designed, performed and analyzed the experiments shown in Figures 2 and 4. NFJ designed, performed and analyzed the experiments shown in Figure 3. THP provided technical assistance and contributed to the preparation of the figures. All authors reviewed the results and approved the final version of the manuscript. *Example 2*: MAF and GFG designed the study and wrote the paper. GFG purified and crystallized AnsT protein and determined its X-ray structure. NFJ characterized AnsT enzyme activity in vitro. THP designed and constructed vectors for expression of mutant proteins and analyzed the mutant phenotypes in bacteria. All authors analyzed the results and approved the final version of the manuscript.

Respondent	Suggestion
Canterbury	Ensure there are clear guidelines that direct researchers to explain what work they did in the production of the output (as opposed to other co-authors). Regarding point 31 of the paper – is the issue when percentages were used because only a percentage and no explanation of the contribution was provided? Or was it that the percentages supplied by co-authors did not tally?
Lincoln	Suggest that researchers do not make a percentage statement about their contribution. It has become an extra administration requirement to check all NRO statements for contribution 'percentage' statements against other LU authors using the same research output.
EIT	We suggest you follow international authorship guidelines and ask for confirmation of the following: Authorship of a publication is warranted if a person makes a significant contribution to a work in at least one of the following ways: • conception and design of research; • analysis and interpretation of data; • drafting the publication or revising it for substantive intellectual content. None of the following is sufficient on its own to justify attribution of authorship: • participation solely in the acquisition of funding; • routine collection of data; • general supervision or oversight of a research group or individual. Authors of a publication must be able to take public responsibility for at least that part of the work that falls within their area of expertise, or – as is the convention in some disciplines - the entire paper. • All authors must approve the final version of the publication. Authorship requirements also apply to collaborating staff from other institutions or companies.

Respondent	Suggestion
Victoria	Some kind of guidance about whether percentage contribution or qualitative account of contribution is preferred would be useful. Also exemplars would be helpful.
CPIT	Few areas have single authors and the order of authors is not always indicative of level of contribution, especially in teams which publish together extensively. Therefore it is important that individual contributions are described accurately. Have both a % contribution and ask for specific description.
Massey	These guidelines need be clearer. Specific examples would be most useful.
Individual researcher	Perhaps this could be a series of tick boxes to make the information easier to assimilate
Auckland	Individual contribution should not be given as a percentage but described as an activity; What part of the research was contributed by the individual? What was the individual responsible for? Collaborators often declare this on publication of research anyway. For example: “S.T.G., B.B.-L. and D.E.A. designed the experiment. S.D.P. and D.E.A. assembled input data, and B.B.-L. and S.D.P. wrote code, ran the model, and analysed output data. B.B.-L. administered the experiment and wrote the manuscript” could be changed for BB-L’s EP to “I designed the experiment with two co-authors, wrote code, ran the model and analysed output data with one co-author, and administered the experiment and wrote the manuscript alone”. Outlining the contributions of other authors gives context. The assessor of the NRO can then judge how important that activity was to the NRO.
Waikato	Recommend panels collectively address this question so that information panels require to assess an NRO, is provided by the researcher.

Recommendation

Have the Technical sub-group consider the suggestions and provide clear guidelines for better describing individual contribution for co-authored research outputs.

Changes to file content

10. Do you agree that Prezi files can be accessed via a URI link to a public access website, but not via a file exported to a .EXE file)?

	Response #
Yes	12
No	0

There was unanimous support for this proposal. Some responses indicated there could be an issue if confidential material was not able to be accessed from a public website.

Recommendation

Allow Prezi files to be accessed via a URI link to a public access website, but not via a file exported to a .EXE file

11. Do you support the proposal for TEOs to upload large video files to Youtube, Vimeo or Ustream and provide URIs plus the physical location of a DVD that can be requested if the panellist is unable to access the URI?

	Response #
Yes	12
No	0

There was unanimous support for this proposal. Responses confirmed this should be only one option for provision of video files as upload to public access sites may breach copyright. Panellists can continue to request hard copies to be sent to them via the TEC.

Recommendation

Allow TEOs the option to upload large video files to Youtube, Vimeo or Ustream.

12. Do you agree that panellists expecting to access large video files will be required to have high quality internet access and the latest versions of Quicktime, VLC, and/or Windows Media Player software?

	Response #
Yes	12
No	0

There was unanimous support for this proposal, with no issues raised.

Recommendation

Panellists expecting to access large video files will be required to have high quality internet access and the latest versions of Quicktime, VLC, and/or Windows Media Player software.

13. Do you have any other feedback regarding the changes to the EP schema, the EP template and/or the XSD file?

The following responses were received:

AUT added “It is unclear why the EP schema requires TEOs to list if the EP contains confidential outputs and then if the confidential output is available for review – with the option of ‘no’ being unavailable. This issue is already covered in the Guidelines that all outputs listed in the EP as NROs must have the full item evidence available for review and if OROs then sufficient evidence for verification. These two confidential fields seem redundant for that reason.”

Lincoln asked “could data being collected for the 2018 round include the number of ‘Open Access’ journal articles selected for the Research Component of the portfolio” but the answer is no.

Earlier feedback from the PBRF Managers suggested that the addition of a Preferred Name field would aid TEOs when processing results. This would be added to the Staff data file specification as well as the Researcher element of the EP.

Recommendations

Discuss confidential outputs and if it is necessary to continue with the two fields ContainsConfidentialReserarch and ReleasePermissionObtained.

Add an optional Preferred First Name field to the Researcher element of the EP and to the Staff data file specification.

B. Staff data file specification

Date of Birth

1. Do you agree that default date of birth (as used in the NSI) cannot be used and will result in rejection of the Staff data file?

	Response #
Yes	6
No	6

The responses received were mixed however the solution proposed for the EP schema negates the issues raised for the staff data file date of birth issue.

Recommendation

Allow use of the default date of birth and apply a validation rule to match the date of birth in the Staff data record with that in the NSN. A mismatch will result in a validation error and reject the entire Staff data file.

New and emerging researchers

2. Do you accept the renaming of the Date of First Academic Appointment to Date of First Research Appointment?

	Response #
Yes	4
No	8

There is some confusion around the definition of new and emerging and therefore the best description of the data field to assist with auditing of the new and emerging status of researchers.

University of Canterbury pointed out that "the SRG has confirmed that new and emerging status will be based on the date when the researcher is first research active, as measured by the production of non-supervised research outputs. Given this, it would be appropriate to remove 'Appointment' as employment/appointment is no longer relevant. 'Date of First Research Output' or 'Research Active Date' may be better alternatives."

> ***Recommendation***
>
> *Discuss the options for the renaming of this field and how it would be used.*

3. Do you know of any situation where the date of Employment Contract Change could be required? (This has been removed but could be added back if any reason for retaining it)

	Response #
Yes	6
No	6

Given the change in the new and emerging guidelines, a change in employment contract is no longer relevant.

> ***Recommendation***
>
> *Confirm that given the change in the new and emerging guidelines, Date of Employment Contract Change is no longer relevant and will stay removed.*

Transferring and concurrently employed staff

4. Do you support the addition of the new fields to indicate if a researcher has transferred from another TEO during the 12 month period prior to the PBRF Census date, and if so, the TEO they have transferred from?

	Response #
Yes	8
No	4

5. Do you support the addition of a field to indicate if a researcher is concurrently employed at more than one TEO?

	Response #
Yes	7
Yes - conditional	1
No	4

It was clear from the responses to these two questions that the proposed approach to collection of data for transferring and concurrently employed PBRF-eligible staff needed to be reviewed.

The requirement for the staff data collection is that data submitted by tertiary education organisations (TEOs) must include details of all staff members employed or contracted for services between 15 June 2017 and 14 June 2018:

- for whom an Evidence Portfolio has been submitted for the 2018 Quality Evaluation; or
- who are PBRF-eligible but transferred between 15 June 2017 and 14 June 2018 to another TEO that is submitting the EP; or
- who are PBRF-eligible and concurrently employed by another TEO at 14 June 2018 that is submitting the EP.

The reason for submitting details about transferred or concurrently employed PBRF-eligible staff is to ensure any funding is shared across the TEOs.

The proposal to ask the TEO that submits the EP to include information about transferring-in and concurrently employed PBRF-eligible staff may not result in accurate data as several responses advised that this information is not always known by the TEO submitting the EP.

After reviewing the feedback and considering options the current suggestion is to remove the three fields:

- *Did staff transfer?*
- *Transfer From Provider ID*
- *Concurrently employed?*

For TEOs **not submitting an EP for a PBRF-eligible staff member** but who wish to obtain some funding benefit from the period of service that was conducted in the year by a PBRF-eligible staff member who has transferred out, or who is concurrently employed, a record should be submitted in the Staff data file and the following assumptions will be made:

PBRF-eligible staff who have transferred to another TEO will be defined by:

- No matching EP for this staff member from this TEO
- There must be a matching EP (using NSN) from one other TEO
- The inclusion of End Date implies the staff member transferred out on that date

Concurrently employed PBRF-eligible staff defined by:

- No matching EP for this staff member from this TEO
- There must be a matching EP (using NSN) from one other TEO
- End Date has no value
- FTE must be less than 1.00

Note that this solution relies on the use of consistent NSNs across TEOs as the TEC will use NSN to match data for funding calculations.

If inconsistent NSNs are used, the matching rules will fail and an “orphan” record in the Staff data file will cause the entire file to be rejected.

Recommendations

Remove the three fields:

- *Did staff transfer?*
- *Transfer From Provider ID*
- *Concurrently employed?*

Discuss the assumptions regarding the definitions of:

- *PBRF-eligible staff who have transferred to another TEO*
- *Concurrently employed PBRF-eligible staff*

and advise if they are correct and will meet the TEC requirement for calculating funding.

6. Do you have any other feedback regarding the changes to the Staff data file specification?

Lincoln noted that “the Staff Data file and portfolio no longer have a ‘gender’ question but this has not been mentioned in the consultation paper material.”

Reference to the removal of gender was included in Appendix 3 of the consultation paper but perhaps there should be additional communication regarding the removal of gender and ethnicity fields from the Staff data file collection.

Nominated Academic Unit is still included in the data specification but a decision on whether it remains or not is pending.

Recommendation

Communicate that gender and ethnicity (previously collected for the Ministry of Education) have been removed from the PBRF Staff data collection as they are not required for the PBRF, but are likely to be included in the Ministry of Education’s Annual TEO staff data collection.

C. Any other matters

It should be noted that the Evidence Portfolio schema definition and the PBRF Staff data file specification will continue to change until decisions arising from consultation papers are published, and the PBRF Quality Evaluation 2018 Guidelines have been completed.

Since this consultation paper was published, there are some other changes resulting from SRG decisions.

Extra-ordinary Circumstances EP elements

The structure of the Canterbury Extra-ordinary Circumstance and the Extra-ordinary Circumstance elements can be confirmed shortly.

Confirmation of the Canterbury Impact codes and the Extra-ordinary circumstance codes is pending.

The validation rule to check that the maximum number of NRO and ORO elements have not been provided if Canterbury Extra-ordinary Circumstances or Extra-ordinary Circumstances have been claimed, is likely to be removed.

Recommendations

Confirm the structure of the Canterbury Extra-ordinary Circumstance and the Extra-ordinary Circumstance elements.

Remove the validation rule to check that the maximum number of NRO and ORO elements have not been provided if Canterbury Extra-ordinary Circumstances or Extra-ordinary Circumstances have been claimed.