Tertiary Education Commission
Te Amorangi Mātauranga Matua

Performance-Based Research Fund

Guidelines for the Quality Evaluation 2026 assessment process

Consultation Draft, August 2023

Contents

Providing feedback on this document

This document is a consultation draft of the *Guidelines for the Quality Evaluation 2026 assessment process*. It is one of four guidelines documents that will be produced by the TEC as part of the Performance-Based Research Fund (PBRF) Quality Evaluation 2026 round.

The document updates the equivalent 2018 version of the assessment guidelines. It incorporates the in-principle decisions made by the TEC on the basis of the Sector Reference Group (SRG) consultation process that ran from September 2021 to July 2023.

The TEC established the SRG to provide advice and recommendations to us on operational changes to the design of the Quality Evaluation 2026. An accompanying document provides a full record of the in-principle decisions that TEC has made based on the SRG's recommendations.

The general purpose of consultation on a full draft of these assessment guidelines is to ensure that all changes have been clearly explained, rather than to seek further feedback on the substantive decisions made earlier in the process. However, in the draft *Guidelines for TEOs*, which have been released for consultation at the same time as this document, there are three new proposals for changes.

These three new proposed changes have arisen out of SRG recommendations based on sector feedback on the technical matters and reporting papers:

- **Introducing the use of ANZSRC codes** for the Field of Research field in the EP, rather than retaining a free text field. This proposal was made by the University of Otago.
- **Adding an EP Language field**, to allow participating staff members to indicate if any languages other than English are used any of the ERE Outputs included in the EP. This proposal was made by Victoria University of Wellington.
- **Updating the description of 'Software'** as a Research Output type 'to better reflect current practice. This proposal was made by the University of Auckland.

The TEC invites feedback on this draft, including these three new proposals, which can be provided via an online survey: https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/9HBB32J

The survey is open from 11 August to 22 September 2023. All feedback received will be carefully considered by the SRG and the TEC and the final guidelines will be published in November 2023.

If you have any questions about this consultation, please contact PBRF.Help@tec.govt.nz.
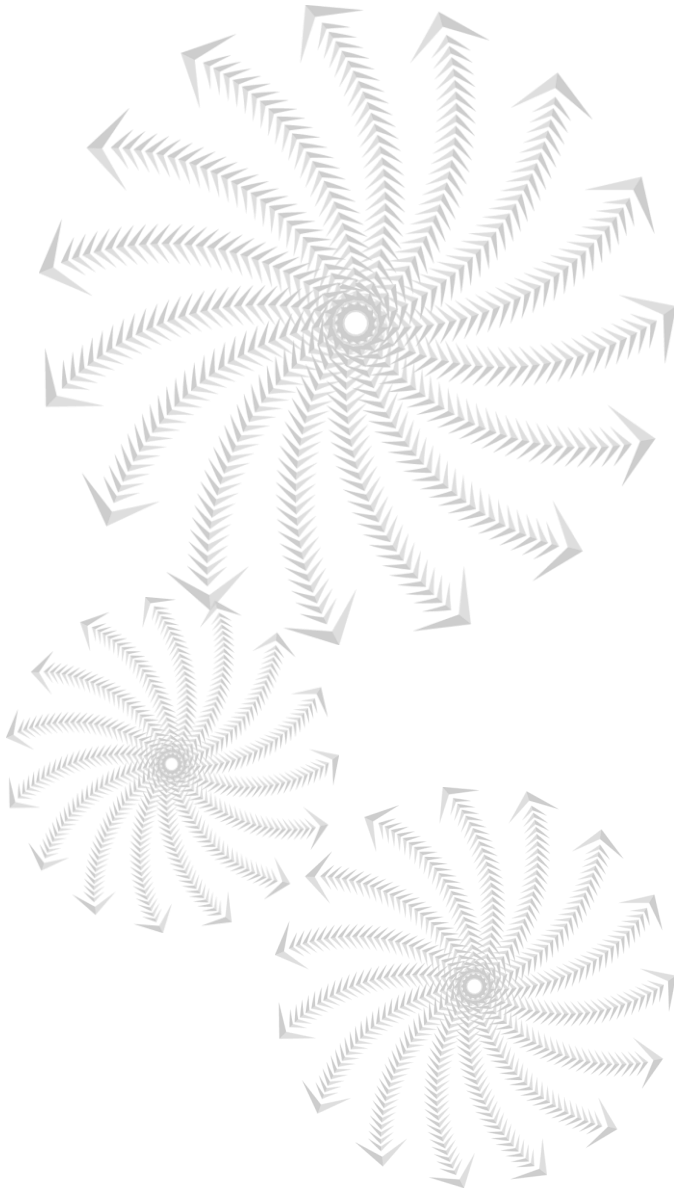
Guidelines for the Quality Evaluation 2026 assessment process

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How to use these guidelines

Structure of these guidelines

This document provides information about the assessment process undertaken by the peer review panels.

This includes information on the responsibilities of the panels, the scoring system and detailed scoring descriptors for Evidence Portfolios (EPs), the stages in the assessment process, the moderation process, and information about conflicts of interest and confidentiality.

Information on the background and purpose of the PBRF can be found on the PBRF pages of the TEC's website www.tec.govt.nz.

Other available guidelines

For Quality Evaluation 2026, we have provided guidelines for three specific audiences:

› tertiary education organisations (TEOs)
› panels carrying out the assessment process (this document)
› participating TEO staff members (not yet available).

The *Guidelines for tertiary education organisations* provide information that TEOs need to determine staff eligibility, complete EPs, understand and participate in the TEC audit process, and understand the reporting of results. It also provides information about other related processes, such as submitting conflict of interest notices and complaints to the TEC.

The Guidelines for participating staff TEO members provide staff members with an overview of the process, their responsibilities, and the responsibilities of their employing TEO and the TEC. It also identifies the key areas of the Quality Evaluation process that relate to them and who can provide support. The guide is designed to be an overview of the process and it directs staff members to the relevant areas of the other guidelines.

The peer review panels also develop *Panel-Specific Guidelines* to provide subject and discipline-specific information to help staff develop their EPs. These are designed to be read in conjunction with the TEO guidelines.

The table below shows the main audience for each document. A tick (✓) indicates that the document also contains information relevant for that particular audience.

Audience	Guide for staff	Guidelines for TEOs	Guidelines for the assessment process	Panel-specific guidelines
Peer review panels			Main audience	✓
TEOs	✓	Main audience	✓	✓
Staff members	Main audience	✓	✓	✓

Changes to the guidelines

In previous Quality Evaluations, sector queries and other decisions affecting the Quality Evaluation process have led to minor clarifications to the Guidelines following publication. Any future changes made to these guidelines will be set out in the table below.

Change	Page reference	Date of update
Brief description of the change	p. xx	Month, Year
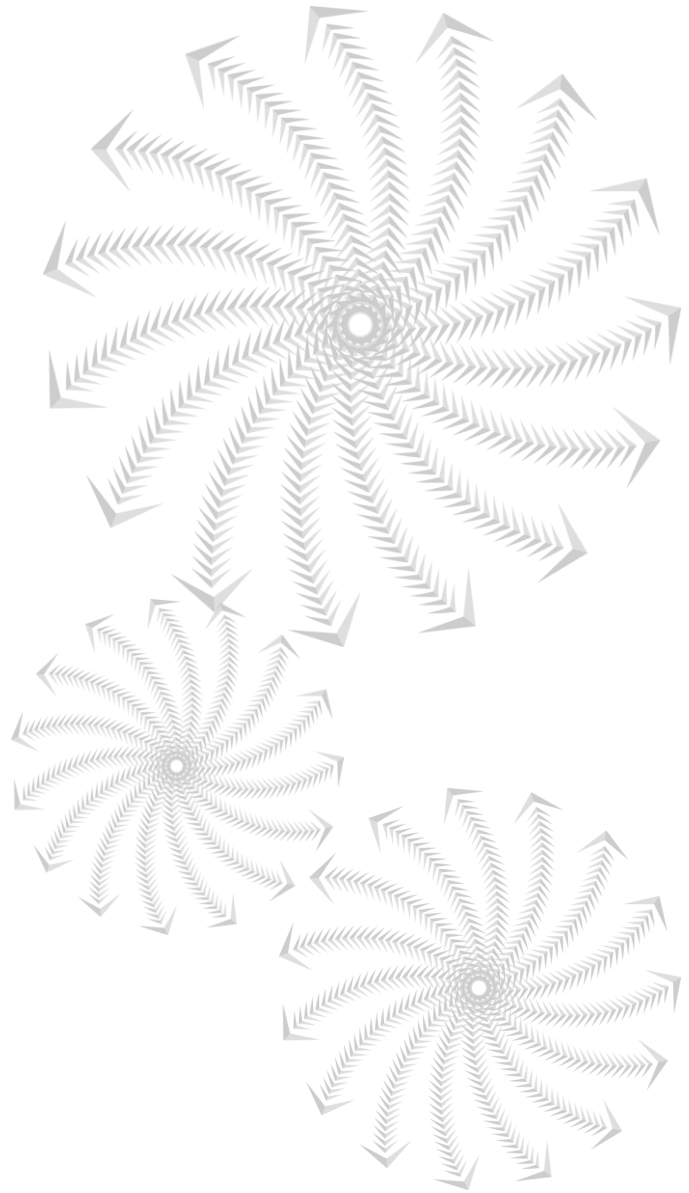
Quality Evaluation 2026

An overview

What happens in the Quality Evaluation?

The primary purpose of the Performance-Based Research Fund (PBRF) is to ensure that excellent research in the tertiary education sector is encouraged and rewarded. The Fund allocates $315 million a year in total across three components: the Quality Evaluation, Research Degree Completions, and External Research Income.

Quality Evaluation 2026 is an assessment of the research performance of staff at eligible tertiary education organisations (TEOs) for the period 1 January 2018 to 31 December 2025. The results of Quality Evaluation 2026 will determine the allocation of 55 percent of the Fund for a seven-year period (2026 to 2032).

TEOs determine which of their staff members are eligible to participate if their research is likely to meet the standard for a funded Quality Category. They compile Evidence Portfolios (EPs) for these staff based on the relevant submission options for them under the Achievement Relative to Opportunity framework. EPs that TEOs decide are not likely to meet the requirements for achieving a funded Quality Category are not submitted for panel assessment.

TEOs submit a Staff Data File, which provides information to confirm the identity, eligibility status, and submission details of staff who are submitting EPs to the TEC. Following this, TEOs submit EPs to be considered by one of the 14 peer review panels. This information is submitted through the PBRF IT System and audited by the TEC to ensure that staff meet the eligibility criteria and that the information provided in EPs is accurate. This information is used in the reporting of results and form the basis of the funding calculation.

The peer review panels complete their assessment and assign one of six Quality Categories to each EP. Where needed, elements of an EP can be cross-referred to other panels. The overall process is overseen by a Moderation Panel, which ensures PBRF standards and processes are applied consistently across all panels.

The TEC administers the submission and assessment process through the PBRF IT System, provides support for panels and TEOs, and considers and approves the findings of the Quality Evaluation for funding and reporting of results.

At the conclusion of the Quality Evaluation, the TEC reports the results and calculates updated TEO funding allocations for the Quality Evaluation component.

Figure 1: The stages of the Quality Evaluation 2026 process

Staff eligibility
TEOs assess staff against the eligibility criteria to determine which staff can participate in Quality Evaluation 2026 and determine whether EPs for PBRF-eligible staff are likely to meet the standard for a funded Quality Category

↓

Completing and submitting EPs
Eligible staff complete EPs and the TEOs submit the EPs that are likely to meet the standard for a funded Quality Category and the PBRF Staff Data file to TEC

PBRF IT system
Submitted EPs are validated through the TEC's PBRF IT system and assigned to panels

↓

Audit
The EP and staffing data submitted by TEOs is audited and validated by the TEC's audit team

↓

Assessment of EPs
Panel Members assess and score EPs, including cross-referral assessments

↓

Initial Moderation
The Moderation Panel meets to review the pre-panel meeting assessment process and results

↓

Panel meetings
Panels meet to complete the assessment process and assign Quality Categories

↓

Final Moderation
The Moderation Panel meets to review the panel meeting assessment process and results

Reporting of interim results
TEC produces an interim report on the results of Quality Evaluation 2026

Staff request results
Staff can request their own detailed assessment results

Complaints process
TEOs can submit complaints to the TEC if they believe that there has been an administrative or procedural error in the assessment of an EP

↓

Reporting of final results
TEC produces a final report on the results of Quality Evaluation 2026 following the completion of the complaints process

Funding
TEC approves funding based on the final results of Quality Evaluation 2026

Key dates for Quality Evaluation 2026

Phase	Deadline/activity	Dates
The assessment period	Eligibility period for Evidence Portfolio items	1 January 2018 – 31 December 2025
Audit – process	TEO process assurance audit	February 2025 – September 2025
Staff-eligibility period9	Staff must be employed or contracted by the submitting TEO within this period and **on 11 June 2026** to be considered PBRF-eligible	12 June 2025 – 11 June 2026
TEOs submit of EPs and Staff Data	Preliminary submission date for EP data and PBRF Staff Data files	**3 July 2026**
	Period for final review and correction of EP data and PBRF Staff Data files	3 July 2026 - 4.00pm 9 July 2026
	Close-off date for resubmission of EP data and PBRF Staff Data files	**4.00pm 9 July 2026**
	Deadline for Vice-Chancellor's/Chief Executive Officer's declaration	**4.00pm 13 July 2026**
Audit – data	Data evaluation audit	July 2026 – December 2026
Panel assessment and moderation	Assignment of EPs for assessment	11 July 2026 – 23 August 2026
	Requesting physical ERE Outputs	15 days to request, 15 days to supply
	Pre-meeting panellist assessment of EPs	24 August 2026 – 30 October 2026
	Panel meetings	16 November 2026 – 4 December 2026
	Moderation Panel meeting	December 2026
Reporting and complaints process	Interim report on Quality Evaluation 2026 results released Final Quality Categories reported to TEOs Staff requests for Quality Evaluation 2026 results start	April 2027
	35-day period for TEOs to lodge complaints	April 2027 – May 2027

Phase	Deadline/activity	Dates
	60-day period for the TEC to investigate complaints	May – July 2027
	Final report on 2026 Quality Evaluation results released	September 2027
Funding allocations	Indicative funding allocations for 2026 and 2027 updated with new results Indictive allocations for 2028 calculated	October 2027
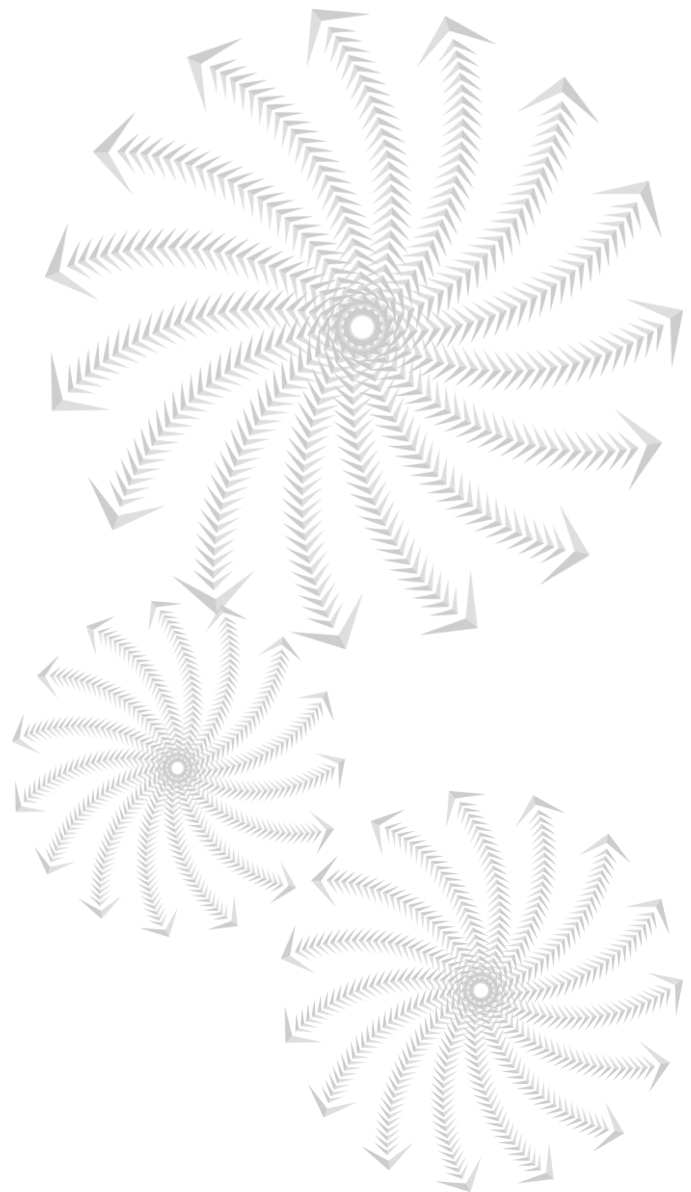
Quality Evaluation 2026

What is research?

What counts as research in Quality Evaluation 2026?

The PBRF Definition of Research is intended to be a broad and inclusive characterisation that includes original investigation in all domains, including Mātauranga Māori, Pacific research, and creative, professional, and applied research. The PBRF Quality Evaluation explicitly recognises that research excellence occurs across the full spectrum of original investigative activity.

PBRF Definition of Research

The PBRF Definition of Research has been expanded to ensure that it better reflects the diversity of ontologies and epistemologies in the Aotearoa New Zealand and reflects the importance of Mātauranga Māori as a taonga under Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

For the purposes of the PBRF, research is defined as a process of investigation or inquiry leading to new, recovered, or reinterpreted knowledge or understanding which is effectively shared and capable of rigorous assessment by the appropriate experts.

In Aotearoa New Zealand our distinctive research cultures and environments draw on diverse ontological, epistemological, and methodological traditions of critical inquiry, experimentation, and knowledge-creation. This definition of research includes Māori ways of knowing, being, and conducting rangahau such as kaupapa Māori and mātauranga Māori; diverse Pacific ways of knowing, being, and conducting research; and work that embodies new insights of direct relevance to the specific needs of iwi, hapū, marae, communities, government, scholarship and teaching, industry, and commerce, which may be developed through collaborative and practice-led processes involving stakeholders from those constituencies.

Research can be an individual or collective process and may be embodied in the form of artistic works, performances, designs, policies, or processes that lead to novel or substantially improved insights.

For further clarification, research includes:

› Activity that leads to scholarly books, journal articles, and other nationally and internationally published outputs and presentations that offer new, recovered, or reinterpreted knowledge;

› Activity that leads to contributions to the intellectual underpinning of different ontologies and epistemologies, subjects, and disciplines (for example, dictionaries, scholarly editions, teaching materials that embody original research, or teaching practices or activities that produce original research);

› Applications of existing knowledge to produce new or substantially improved materials, devices, products, designs, policies, granted patents, or creative outputs;

› Re-centering and revitalisation of knowledge (for example, the study of raranga, whakapapa narratives, waiata composition, navigational knowledge, translation studies, historical or literary archival studies, or ecological research); and

› The synthesis and analysis of previous research to the extent that the insights generated are new.

It does not include:

› routine testing and data collection lacking analysis, interpretation and/or evaluation;

› preparation for teaching that does not embody original research (for example, collation of existing research and research outputs into handbooks or textbooks where this does not embody new insights); or

› the legal and administrative aspects of intellectual property protection and commercialisation activities.

Mātauranga Māori

The new definition of research includes explicit reference to Māori ways of knowing, being, and conducting rangahau. Rangahau and knowledge of relevance to Māori communities, such as kaupapa Māori and mātauranga Māori, are essential components of Aotearoa New Zealand's distinctive research cultures.

The Mātauranga Māori panel's Panel-Specific Guidance has elaborated the ontologies, epistemologies, methodologies, knowledges and understandings which comprise Te Āo Māori. This elaboration applies across all panels and will be used to determine whether EPs should be cross-referred.

Pacific Research

The new definition of research includes explicit reference to diverse Pacific ways of knowing, being, and conducting research. Research and knowledge of relevance to Pacific communities are essential components of Aotearoa New Zealand's distinctive research cultures.

The Pacific Research panel's Panel-Specific Guidance has elaborated the topics, ontologies, epistemologies, methodologies, knowledges and understandings which make up Pacific research cultures. This elaboration applies across all panels and will be used to determine whether EPs should be cross-referred.

Research excellence and impact

For the purposes of the Quality Evaluation, research excellence will be assessed in terms of originality, rigour, reach, and significance, with reference to the quality standards appropriate to the subject area and to the unique nature of Aotearoa New Zealand's research cultures and needs.

Excellence will be assessed across the following areas of activity:

› The production and creation of knowledge, including ontologies, epistemologies, and methodologies unique to Māori and to Pacific communities;

› The dissemination and application of that knowledge within academic and/or other communities and its impact outside the research environment; and

› Activity which sustains and develops the research environment, within and across both academic and non-academic domains.

For the purposes of the Quality Evaluation, the impact of research is defined as a positive effect on, change, or benefit to society, culture, the environment, or the economy at any level, outside the research environment.

Impacts on scholarship, research, or the advancement of knowledge within the research environment are not included under impact as they already fall within the broader definition of research excellence.
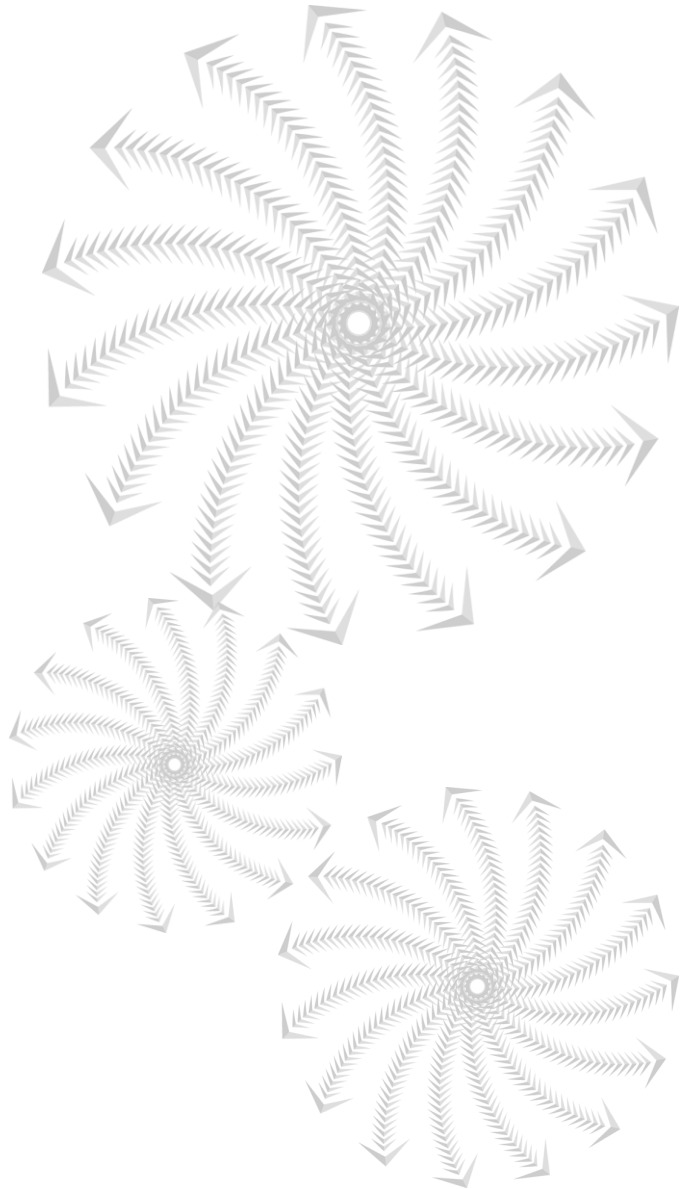
Quality Evaluation 2026

What is an Evidence Portfolio?

What is an Evidence Portfolio?

An Evidence Portfolio (EP) is the key element of the Quality Evaluation. It represents an eligible staff member's best examples of research and research-related activity carried out during the assessment period.

EPs are submitted on behalf of staff members by participating TEOs where they have determined that a staff member is eligible and likely to achieve a funded Quality Category. An EP contains all the information that will be assessed by peer review panels.

› An EP has two assessed components:
  – the Examples of Research Excellence component (ERE component)
  – the Contributions to the Research Environment component (CRE component).
› The assessment is based on the quality of the research outputs and activities submitted in the EP.
› EPs have a mixture of optional and non-optional items. All items submitted in the EP will be considered as part of the assessment of quality; however, the number of optional items included in the EP will have no bearing on the outcome of the assessment. This is in line with the principle that the PBRF Quality Evaluation assesses research quality, not quantity.
› Staff members should select their best research outputs and research-related activities completed in the assessment period.
› TEOs submit EPs following their internal processes. The TEC does not require staff members to sign off or approve the content of EPs submitted. Only one EP can be submitted for each PBRF-eligible staff member.
› Te Reo Māori can be used to complete any or all of the information in the staff member's EP.

What information is in an Evidence Portfolio?

EPs submitted to Quality Evaluation 2026 are made up of the following sections:
› EP Details
› Researcher Details
› Panel Details
› Platform of Research – Contextual Summary
› Examples of Research Excellence (ERE) Component:
  – Examples of Research Excellence (ERE) section
    o Up to three EREs, each containing:
      ▪ ERE narrative
      ▪ ERE Output
      ▪ Up to three Supplementary Items
  – Other Examples of Research Excellence (OEREs) section
    o Single contextual narrative
    o Up to eight OEREs

> › Contributions to the Research Environment (CRE) Component
> — Up to ten CRE items

Some sections are optional, and some have a minimum and maximum number of items, while other parts are mandatory. The diagram below provides an overview to the EP structure and should be consulted in conjunction with the illustrative EP template.

Structure of Evidence Portfolios for Quality Evaluation 2026

EP Details		Mandatory section
Researcher Details		Optional section
Panel Details		
Platform of Research - Contextual Summary		

| Examples of Research Excellence Component | ERE 1 · · · · · ERE 3 |
| *Contains 1-3 EREs depending on Achievement Relative to Opportunity options for staff member* | OERE Narrative · · · · · OERE 1 · · OERE 8 |

| Contributions to Research Environment Component | |
| *Mandatory to have 1 CRE item unless staff member is New and Emerging* | CRE 1 · · · · · CRE 10 |

EP = Evidence Portfolio. ERE = Example of Research Excellence. OERE = Other Example of Research Excellence. CRE = Contributions to the Research Environment.

An important feature of the new EP design is that the number of EREs included can vary based on decisions individual researcher make under the Achievement Relative to Opportunity framework. For more information about this framework, see the TEO Guidelines on the TEC's website.
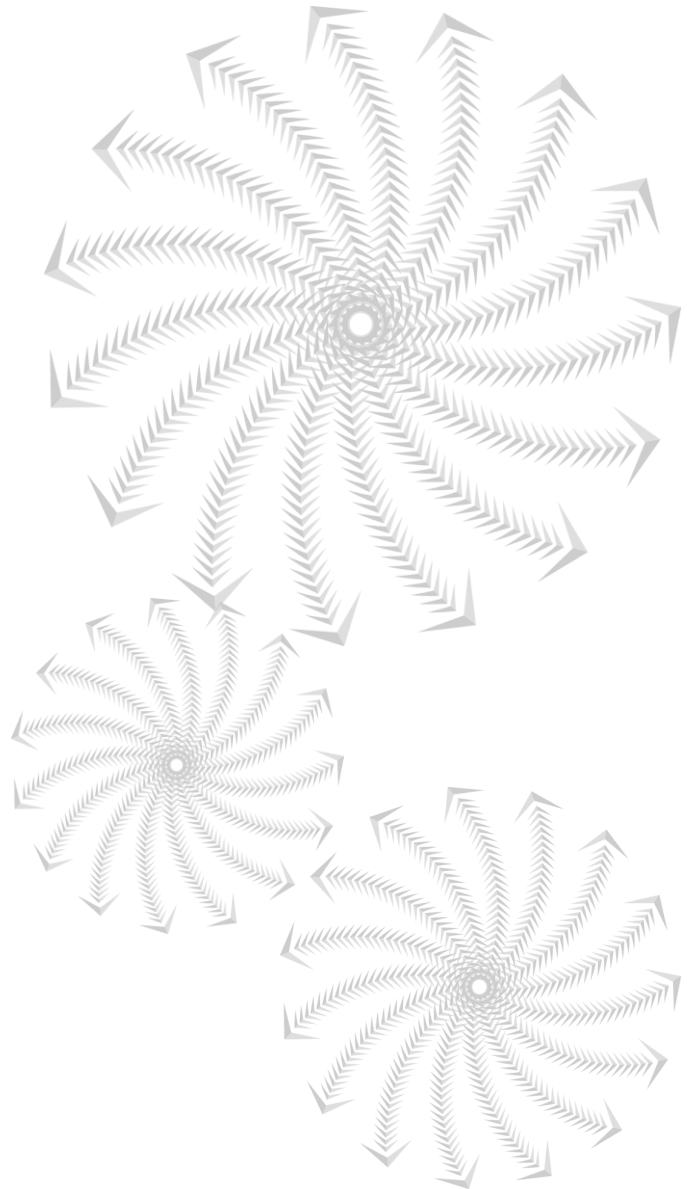
Quality Evaluation 2026

What is the Quality Evaluation assessment?

The Quality Evaluation 2026 assessment

The Quality Evaluation is the assessment of the research quality of tertiary education organisation (TEO) staff. This quality is assessed by expert peer review panels through the research activity presented in an Evidence Portfolio (EP) for each eligible staff member.

› An EP is assessed on its two components:
  − Examples of Research Excellence (ERE)
  − Contributions to the Research Environment (CRE).
› The Quality Evaluation assessment is concerned with the quality of the research rather than the quantity of research submitted in the EP.

The general principles of the Quality Evaluation assessment

The following principles should be used in assessing EPs:

› The Quality Evaluation is a standards-referenced rather than a norm-referenced assessment process. There are no predetermined limits on the proportion of PBRF-eligible staff members' EPs that can be awarded particular Quality Categories.
› The assessment is a holistic, judgement-based process that incorporates **all** the information provided in the full EP including the Platform of Research – Contextual Summary. This information is judged against the component and tie-point descriptors for each of the two components of the EP and also the descriptors for each Quality Category.
› Only the information contained in the EP, along with any ERE Outputs examined by the relevant peer review panel, will be used for assessment purposes. No external information will be taken into account; for example, what a panellist may know as part of their professional role. Panels cannot seek out any additional information to inform their judgements.
› There are specific considerations for new and emerging researchers that relate to assigning the C(NE) Quality Category.
› The Achievement Relative to Opportunity framework recognises that being a new and emerging researcher, part-time researcher, and/or having experienced eligible Researcher Circumstances affect the quantity of research and/or research-related activity carried out during the assessment period and allow for staff members in these groups to submit reduced numbers of EREs in an EP.
› In the ERE component, each output must meet the PBRF Definition of Research and the output(s) collectively would normally be of sufficient quality to meet the standard for an RO score of two (as a minimum) to be considered for a funded Quality Category.
› At the detailed reassessment stage, particular attention will be given to EPs that:
  − are on, or close to, the boundaries between Quality Categories
  − have unusual combinations of scores between the components (for example, seven for ERE but two for CRE).

What is the platform of research?

The research platform is the body of research that primarily includes the outputs as described in the ERE and the OEREs.

ERE component scores are likely to be higher where the overall platform of research in an EP shows evidence of a greater breadth or depth of research activity. However, this does not mean that having more items means a higher score will be awarded – the quality of the items, not the quantity, is the focus of the assessment.

The Platform of Research – Contextual Summary is a narrative component which provides staff members with the opportunity to present panellists with information that will allow them to contextualise the items submitted in the ERE and CRE components.

It should provide a clear introduction to the research outputs, activities and research-related activity presented within the EP and reflect the staff member's overall platform of research. The focus is on how the staff member's overall platform of research and research activity has contributed to their field, discipline, or area, rather than on indicators of esteem or standing.

Staff members can also use this component to provide relevant information on their research context, which may include, for example:

› the specific research environment they are working in, such as applied research or professional practice, relevant norms associated with that environment, and how this informs the type of research outputs and activities they produce

› any changes in the focus of their research within the assessment period

› any information about relevant activity carried out during the assessment period that is not submitted as an item within the EP but that provides important contextual information

› an inter- and trans-disciplinary approach bridging multiple fields or multiple subcategories in a panel or across panels; for example, research that combines Mātauranga Māori and Western approaches.

Each panel has developed panel-specific guidelines that may provide specific advice on what information should be included in the Platform of Research – Contextual Summary.

For Quality Evaluation 2026 the Contextual Summary – Platform of Research narrative has a reduced character count relative to Quality Evaluation 2018 (1,500 as opposed to 2,500). This reflects the new EP design, which provides other opportunities to give narrative detail and context through the contextual narrative required for each ERE, as well as through the optional OERE summary narrative.

It also reflects that the Achievement Relative to Opportunity framework means that narrative about being new and emerging, or part-time, is no longer required in this field. Instead, these factors are taken into account via submission requirements.

Assessing new and emerging researchers

EPs from staff members identified as new and emerging researchers may be assigned the following Quality Categories: A, B, C(NE) and R(NE).

There are special assessment requirements for new and emerging staff to be considered for the C(NE) Quality Category. New and emerging researchers must meet the same standards as all other staff members to be considered for the A and B Quality Categories. The EPs of new and emerging researchers that do not meet the standard for a funded Quality Category will be assigned an R(NE) Quality Category.

ERE component

New and emerging researchers can be considered for the C(NE) Quality Category with a less well-established platform of research than would normally be considered for a C Quality Category.

The submission of a thesis is **not** a requirement for new and emerging researchers, but theses can be included as an eligible type of ERE Output, Supplementary Item, or OERE. If a new and emerging researcher is submitting more than one ERE, it is expected that at least one other quality-assured ERE Output is also submitted as well as a thesis. If only submitting one ERE, it is usually preferable to choose a quality-assured output.

Collectively, the EREs need to be of sufficient quality to meet the standard for an ERE component score of two (as a minimum). This allows for a new and emerging researcher to be considered for the C(NE) Quality Category.

CRE component

Evidence in the CRE component is not required for a new and emerging researcher's EP to be assigned a C(NE) Quality Category. New and emerging researchers are encouraged, however, to complete this component of their EP, as this may allow the EP to be considered for a higher Quality Category.

Scoring of new and emerging researchers

A new and emerging researcher awarded a score of two for their ERE component and a one or zero in their CRE component will have their weighted score automatically rounded up from 140 or 170 to 200. This is the only unique scoring consideration for new and emerging researchers. New and emerging researchers are required to meet the same standards as established researchers to obtain an A or B Quality Category.
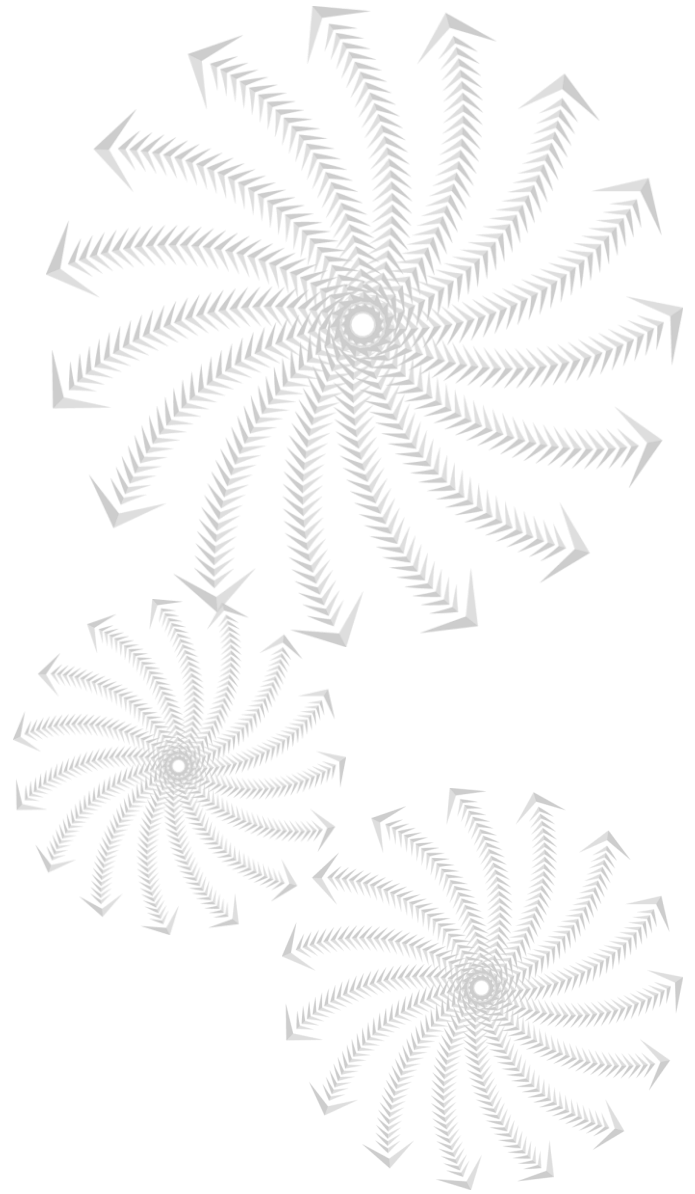
Quality Evaluation 2026

What is the role of peer review panels?

Responsibilities of panel Co-Chairs and members

The role of a peer review panel is to assign a Quality Category to each Evidence Portfolio (EP) that has been allocated to it. The responsibilities of panel Co-Chairs and members are outlined below.

What are Peer Review panels?

As part of running the PBRF, the TEC convenes expert panels to directly assess research quality based on researchers' submitted EPs.

Peer review panels cover defined subject areas, which are drawn from a list of 43 options that have been defined for use in the PBRF.

Panellists are appointed for their specific expertise and knowledge, and expertise in assessing research. They do not act as representatives of their employer or discipline.

Panels are supported by a TEC Panel Advisor who provides technical, process and administrative advice; monitors the assessment process; and supports the Co-Chairs and panellists as required.

For Quality Evaluation 2026, there will be 14 peer review panels, organised as follows:

Panel	Panel Identifier	Subject Area
Biological Sciences	BIOS	Agriculture and other applied biological sciences
		Ecology, evolution and behaviour
		Molecular, cellular and whole organism biology
Business and Economics	BEC	Accounting and finance
		Economics
		Management, human resources, industrial relations, international business and other business
		Marketing and tourism
Creative and Performing Arts	CPA	Design
		Music, literary arts and other arts
		Theatre and dance, film and television and multimedia
		Visual arts and crafts
Education	EDU	Education

Panel	Panel Identifier	Subject Area
Engineering, Technology and Architecture	ETA	Architecture, design, planning, surveying
		Engineering and technology
Health	HEALTH	Dentistry
		Nursing
		Other health studies (including rehabilitation therapies)
		Pharmacy
		Sport and exercise science
		Veterinary studies and large animal science
Humanities and Law	HAL	English language and literature
		Foreign languages and linguistics
		History, history of art, classics and curatorial studies
		Law
		Philosophy
		Religious studies and theology
Mātauranga Māori	MĀORI	Māori knowledge and development
Mathematical and Information Sciences and Technology	MIST	Computer science, information technology, information sciences
		Pure and applied mathematics
		Statistics
Medicine	MED	Biomedical
		Clinical medicine
Pacific Research	PACIFIC	Pacific research
Physical Sciences	PHYSC	Chemistry
		Earth sciences
		Physics
Public Health	PUB	Public Health
Social Sciences and Other Cultural/ Social Studies	SSOCSS	Anthropology and archaeology
		Communications, journalism and media studies
		Human geography
		Political science, international relations and public policy
		Psychology

Panel	Panel Identifier	Subject Area
		Sociology, social policy, social work, criminology and gender studies

For Quality Evaluation 2026, some important changes have been made to the peer review panels membership criteria, composition expectations, and structure. These changes reflect the new PBRF principles of Partnership, Equity, and Inclusiveness. For Quality Evaluation 2026:

› peer review panels will be led by Panel Co-Chairs, at least one of whom will have expertise in Māori knowledge

› all panellists will be expected to demonstrate awareness and understanding of Te Tiriti o Waitangi and the significance of Māori-Crown partnership

› all panellists will be expected to demonstrate an appreciation of the diverse range of ontologies, epistemologies, knowledges, and research in Aotearoa New Zealand

› Co-Chairs will convene panels which better reflect the diversity of people and research cultures in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Responsibilities of a panel Co-Chair in the assessment process

Panel Co-Chairs are responsible for ensuring that the panel assessment process is conducted in a fair, transparent, and timely way according to the Guidelines and other policies and processes set out by the TEC. They will do this by:

› assigning each EP to two panel members for pre-meeting assessment and determining which of these panel members will be the lead for that EP

› if necessary, deciding whether part of an EP requires cross-referral to another peer review panel, or whether an EP requires transferral to another peer review panel, and liaising with the Co-Chairs of the cross-referred panel to facilitate this process

› advising and mentoring panel members, as required, on the assessment criteria and processes

› chairing meetings of the panel to review and calibrate the scores and to assign EPs to Quality Categories

› ensuring panel decisions are documented and that critical issues necessary for a fair review are appropriately addressed

› ensuring that the panel completes its preparation and evaluation work to agreed timeframes

› ensuring that all panel members have an opportunity to contribute to the process and participate fully in the panel's activities

› taking due regard of the decisions of the Moderation Team and the Moderation Panel

› maintaining confidentiality of both the deliberations and decisions of the panel

› exercising due skill and care in the performance of their responsibilities

› managing any conflicts of interest as they relate to panellists
› identifying instances where they may have a conflict of interest and raising this with the Co-Moderators prior to the conflict affecting the assessment process
› reporting to the TEC Board at the end of the Quality Evaluation.

Responsibilities of panel members in the assessment process

Panel members are to participate fully in the evaluation process within their panel.

Specifically, their responsibilities are to:

› understand the principles, guidelines and procedures of the PBRF Quality Evaluation
› assess EPs assigned to them by the Panel Co-Chairs, primarily by assigning preparatory and preliminary scores as required
› understand the broad criteria under which the evaluations are to be made, and apply these objectively to the work of the panel
› be diligent in their preparation for meetings and in completing tasks allocated to them by the Panel Co-Chair (such as undertaking initial assessment of EPs allocated to them in a timely manner)
› contribute fully, constructively and dispassionately to all panel processes and take collective ownership for the panel decisions
› maintain confidentiality of both the deliberations and decisions of the panel
› exercise due skill and care in the performance of their responsibilities
› identify instances where they may have a conflict of interest and raise this with the Panel Co-Chairs prior to the conflict affecting the assessment process.
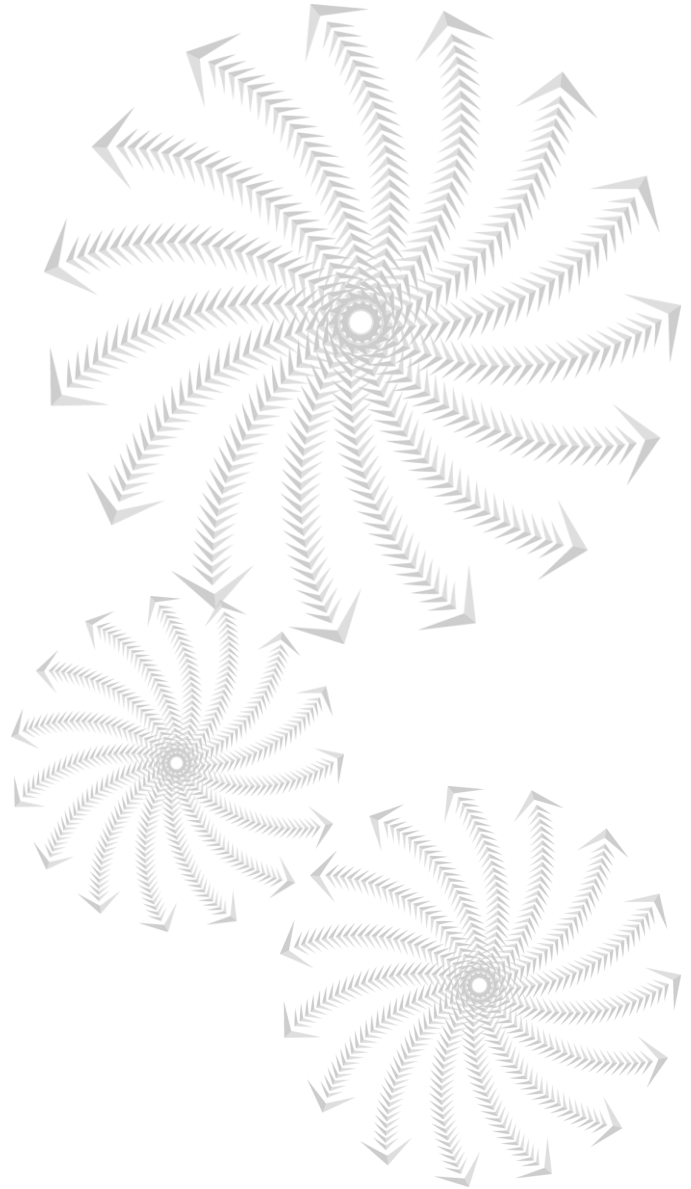
Quality Evaluation 2026

How do conflicts of interest and confidentiality work?

Guidelines for conflict of interest

All panellists involved in Quality Evaluation 2026 are required to comply with the TEC's conflict of interest policy.

Conflict of interest policy

Definition

In the PBRF Quality Evaluation process, individuals are appointed as peer review panellists in their own right, for their specific skills and expertise in both research and the assessment of research.

In this context, a conflict of interest is any situation where a panellist has an interest which conflicts, might conflict or might be perceived to conflict with the interests of the TEC in running a fair, impartial and effective peer review process.

While the conflict of interest itself is unlikely to be improper, it could lead to improper conduct or allegations of such conduct if not declared.

In this context, the term 'panellists' should be read to include Panel Co-Chairs, Panel Members, Moderators, TEC Panel Advisors, and other TEC staff involved in Quality Evaluation 2026

Principles

The TEC's policy on conflict of interest for panellists is guided by the following principles:

› all conflicts of interest must be declared and recorded;

› a conflict of interest can be declared at any time during the process but must be done as soon as practicable;

› Panel Co-Chairs have discretion to take decisions on the action required in any situation;

› the action required depends on the nature of the conflict;

› all actions on declared conflicts will be recorded; and

› individual panellists can exclude themselves from panel discussions even if this is not required by the policy.

The policy is also guided by the fact that the Quality Evaluation process, through the use of the Moderation Team, Co-Chairs, panel pairs and wider panel assessment, ensures that no single panellist is responsible for the decision on the final Quality Category given to an EP.

Identifying a conflict of interest

In determining whether a conflict is present or not, there are two questions to ask:

› Would a fair-minded reasonably informed observer have a reasonable apprehension that the panellist's professional judgement would be compromised in evaluating another researcher's evidence portfolio?

› Does the interest create an incentive for the panellist to act in a way that would be contrary to the objectives of a fair, impartial and effective peer review process?

If the answer to these questions is 'yes', then a conflict exists.

Professional differences of opinion do not necessarily constitute a conflict of interest.

Examples of possible conflicts of interest

Examples of possible conflicts of interest can include, *but are not limited to*:

› assessment of one's own EP

› assessment of the EP of:

  – a family member/partner or close personal friend;

  – a current colleague within the same small academic unit or research team;

  – a close colleague or someone reporting directly to the panellist or to whom the panellist currently reports;

  – a colleague with whom the panellist has, or has had at any time in the assessment period, a research collaboration and/or direct teaching collaboration;

  – an academic who is undertaking doctoral work under the supervision of the panellist;

› assessment of an EP where the panellist may receive a personal financial benefit from a high Quality Category;

› any situation where the panellist considers they might not provide an objective review of another researcher's EP because of a direct, indirect, potential or perceived conflict of interest, or where a reasonable observer would consider the panellist to be conflicted.

Conflict at institutional level

The following activities can be perceived as representing a conflict of interest for panellists:

› involvement in the internal assessment process the TEOs use to determine which EPs to submit to the TEC; and

› the provision by panellists of either general or specific advice or guidance on the preparation of EPs within their TEO.

The provision by panellists of general information and guidance about the assessment process within or outside their employing TEOs is not considered a conflict of interest by the TEC; however to ensure that the peer review process is perceived as fair, impartial and effective the TEC has determined the following principles generally apply to panellists:

› If the panellist is involved in the internal assessment of their TEO's EPs, or they have provided specific advice or guidance on individual EPs at their TEO while serving on a panel, they cannot assess EPs from their TEO at the individual assessment stage and can only contribute to panel discussions at the request of the Panel Co-Chairs.

› If the panellist has no involvement in the internal assessment of their TEO's EPs, they have not provided specific advice or guidance on individual EPs at their TEO while serving on a panel and they have no other conflict of interest, they cannot be a Lead assessor for EPs from their TEO but they may be assigned as a second assessor.

If a panellist has provided specific advice or guidance on the preparation of EPs at a TEO within the assessment period, but is no longer at that TEO, the panellist should identify this as a potential conflict of interest. If the specific advice or guidance on the preparation of EPs has only been at a unit level (for example, a school or department level), then the relevant unit should be identified.

When to declare a conflict of interest

A panellist may declare a conflict of interest at any time during the Quality Evaluation process. Conflicts must be declared as soon as practicable after the person concerned realises that a conflict may exist. However, the TEC would expect any new known or potential conflicts to be declared at the following points in the Quality Evaluation process:

› when first appointed;

› on assignment of EPs;

› at the beginning of peer review panel meetings; and

› when discussing an individual EP at the panel meeting.

Responsibilities

All interests must be recorded within the PBRF IT system, which will create an Interests Register.

All panellists are responsible for registering interests and undertaking any action required by the Panel Co-Chairs.

The TEC's Secretariat is responsible for registering any interests submitted by TEOs, recording any action(s) that may be required, and monitoring the Interests Register.

The Co-Chairs of each panel, on the advice of the TEC Secretariat, are responsible for deciding whether a conflict of interest exists in any instance.

The Co-Chairs of each panel are also responsible for ensuring that:

› all conflicts and any action(s) that may be required have been recorded in the Interests Register;

› appropriate action(s) is taken in respect of the conflict of interest during assignment, assessment and/or panel meetings; and

› the action(s) taken with respect to declared conflicts as part of the panel meeting process is recorded in the panel meeting minutes.

The Moderation Team is responsible for considering conflicts of interest for Co-Chairs and determining the appropriate action to be taken.

The TEC is responsible for undertaking an independent review of the Interests Register and the actions taken.

Actions to take

The nature of any action(s) to be undertaken by a panellist will depend on the extent of the conflict of interest. Most potential conflicts will be managed at the assignment stage of the assessment process, with conflicted panellists not being assigned individual EPs.

Actions may include, but are not limited to, one or more of the following:

› not receiving or being able to access an individual or group of EPs.

> › having no involvement in the EP assessment at any stage and leaving the room when the EP is being discussed and decisions made at the panel meeting.

> › having no involvement in the EP assessment at the individual assessment stage but remaining in the room when the EP is being discussed by the panel at the panel meeting, and participating in the discussion and/or decision-making if asked by the panel Co-Chairs.

> › possible involvement in the EP assessment at the individual assessment stage (although not as the lead assessor) and full participation in the discussion and decision-making on the EP.

The TEC may determine that a panellist's conflicts of interest are at a level that they may impact on the operation of a fair, impartial and effective evaluation process. In such a situation, the TEC reserves the right to stand-down a panellist.

Panel Co-Chair conflicts

Where a Panel Co-Chair has a conflict of interest, this must be declared to the Moderation Team and the TEC's Secretariat assigned to that panel. The decision on what action, if any, should be taken will rest with the Moderation Team.

In these circumstances, the Moderation Team may ask another panellist to act as Panel Co-Chair for the period if it is decided that the Co-Chair is unable to participate.

The TEC's Secretariat will be responsible for recording any action(s) undertaken in the panel meeting minutes.

Assessment of panellists' own EPs

A member of the Moderation Panel, the TEC's Moderation Secretariat, or the TEC's internal auditor will be present during panel meetings when the EP of a panellist is being assessed.

When a panellist's own EP is being assessed by the panel, the panellist will leave the room. Other panellists from the same institution may also be required to leave the room. The Panel Co-Chairs will be responsible for determining an appropriate quorum and seek the Moderation Team's approval of this.

Consideration of a TEO conflict of interest notice

The Co-Chairs of the panel will notify the panel member that a notice of conflict of interest has been received, giving the name of the staff member and the nature of the conflict. The panel member will be given an opportunity to discuss this with the Co-Chairs if required.

The Co-Chirs of the panel will then determine what action, if any, is required.

If the notice is in relation to a Co-Chair of the panel, it will be considered by the Co-Moderators. The decision on what action, if any, is required will also be made by the Co-Moderators.

The TEC's process assurance auditor will review the conflicts of interest and any required actions, and ensuring that these actions, if any, are taken. This provides assurance that any conflict of interest notices are appropriately managed.

Confidentiality policy

All panellists involved in Quality Evaluation 2026 are required to comply with the TEC's confidentiality policy.

The TEC requires all panellists in the Quality Evaluation 2026 to sign a confidentiality agreement. This ensures that all information received, and all discussions and decisions made in the process are kept confidential.

The TEC's confidentiality policy, which all contracted panellists agreed to comply with, is set out below.

Confidentiality of Information policy

As a participant in the PBRF Quality Evaluation 2026 assessment process, you will receive information and be a party to discussions and decisions that may be confidential. You are responsible for taking all reasonable steps to maintain the security of the information provided to you and maintaining this confidentiality during your involvement and after it has ended.

Information

Electronic Information

You must retain any electronic information in a secure manner.

You must not treat electronic information in such a way that it could be accessed by others with or without your knowledge.

Storage and destruction of physical information

You are permitted to obtain and retain physical copies of Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) information (or supporting information) provided for meetings. You must keep these papers secure at all times to avoid the accidental disclosure to a third person. You are not permitted to make additional copies of this information unless expressly authorised by the TEC.

You may elect to return any or all physical copies of information you hold to the TEC for disposal at any time during your tenure as a participant in the PBRF Quality Evaluation 2026 assessment process.

At the end of your tenure you must return to the TEC all physical copies of information you hold that have not been publicly released.

No other uses

You are not permitted to use electronic or physical information for any purpose other than that for which it was provided.

Official Information Act 1982 and Privacy Act 2020

Information received by the TEC will be official information in terms of the Official Information Act (OIA) and may be personal information under the Privacy Act 2020, so may be requested by various parties. The TEC will be responsible for dealing with any requests made under the OIA or the Privacy Act.

For the purposes of section 27(1)(c) of the OIA and section 50 of the Privacy Act 2020, this paragraph constitutes a promise that the TEC will keep confidential at all times your notes relating to your assessment of Evidence Portfolios (EPs). However, you acknowledge that if the TEC receives a request for such notes under the OIA or the Privacy Act, the TEC may be under a legal obligation to release such information and such release will not amount to a breach of the terms of this letter by the TEC.

Confidential information

Confidential information includes, but is not limited to, EPs, associated evidence of Examples of Research Excellence, and the assessment information related to EPs.

Treatment of confidential information

You must not circulate or communicate confidential information provided to you by the TEC, whether in hard copy or by electronic means, to another person for any reason.

Physical copies of any electronic confidential information can be made for the purpose of assessment only. You must keep these papers secure at all times to avoid the accidental disclosure to a third person.

You must not treat confidential information in such a way that it could be accessed by others with or without your knowledge.

At the end of your tenure as a participant in the PBRF Quality Evaluation 2026 assessment process you must:

› return to the TEC for disposal, or securely dispose of, any or all physical copies of confidential information you hold; and

› delete any or all electronic copies of confidential information you hold.

No other uses

You are not permitted to use confidential information for any purpose other than that for which it was received.

PBRF meeting discussions
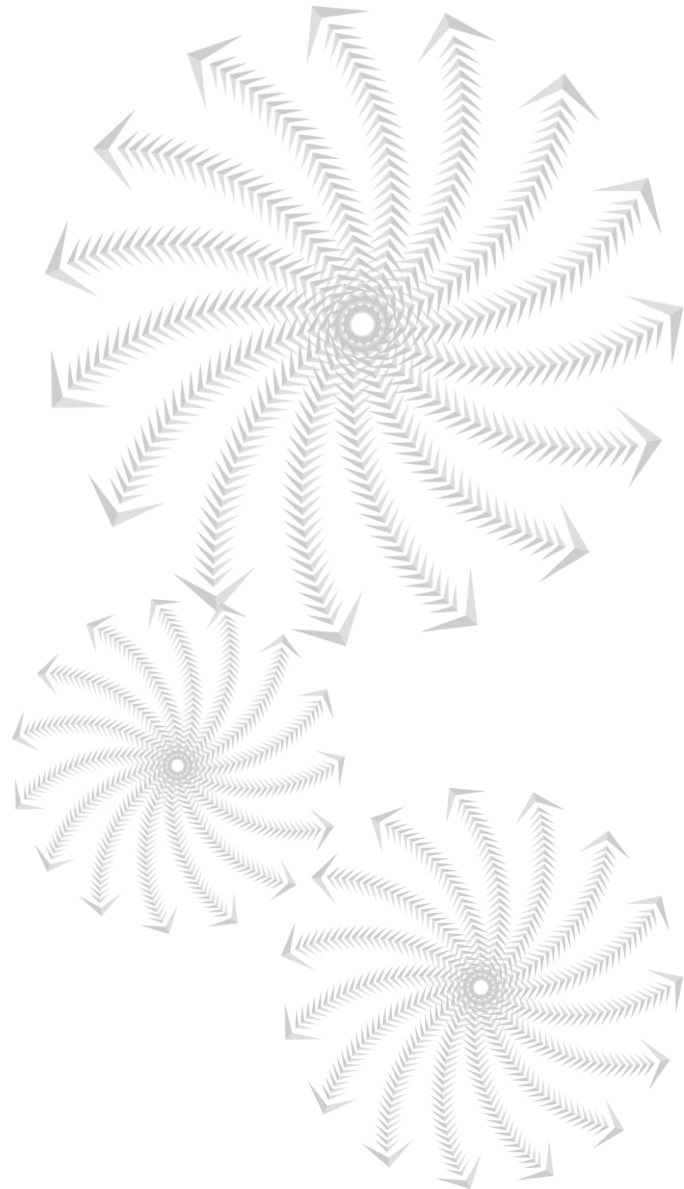
Discussions and communications

You must treat as confidential all discussions and communications between fellow participants (Moderators, Panel Co-Chairs, Panel Members), the TEC Secretariat and other TEC employees.

Outcomes

You must treat as confidential any decisions made by PBRF peer review panels into perpetuity.

Quality Evaluation 2026

How does the scoring system work?

The scoring system for Evidence Portfolios

The numerical scoring system

The first stage in the assessment of Evidence Portfolios (EPs) is based on allocating scores for each of the two components of the EP.

The scoring scale used has the following characteristics:
› the scale has a range from zero to seven
› seven is the highest score on the scale and zero is the lowest
› a score of zero would reflect that no evidence has been provided in the EP for that component
› only whole number scores can be allocated
› the scores of two, four and six are tie-points – these are used to distinguish between different benchmarks of quality.

Both the ERE and CRE components are scored using the zero to seven-point scale. Each component has a specific descriptor and tie-point descriptors to help the panels with scoring.

The component descriptor introduces the component being assessed. The tie-point descriptors encapsulate the standard expected for that score.

Score	Significance
7	Maximum
6	Tie-point
5	
4	Tie-point
3	
2	Tie-point
1	Minimal evidence
0	No evidence supplied

A score of at least two on the ERE component is required for the award of a C and a C(NE) Quality Category. A detailed reassessment at the panel meeting may however over-ride this.

The weighting system for scores

The ERE component is weighted at 70 percent of the total score and the CRE component is weighted at 30 percent of the total score.

These weightings are used for all EPs, to ensure maximum comparability in judgements across panels.

The weighting scoring system is **not** intended as a mechanical or absolute method for determining Quality Categories. The weighted score may be overridden as part of the detailed assessment of EPs at peer review panel meetings.

A weighted score will be automatically calculated by the PBRF IT System for each component of each EP.

The table below provides an example of how a total weighted score is calculated.

EP component	Raw score (0-7)	Weighting (%)	Weighted score
ERE	4	70	280
CRE	5	30	150
Total weighted score			430

Relationship between the total weighted score and Quality Categories

The table below is used for the scoring of all EPs except those identified as new and emerging researchers.

CRE Component Score		ERE Component Score							
		0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	0	0	70	140	210	280	350	420	490
	1	30	100	170	240	310	380	450	520
	2	60	130	200	270	340	410	480	550
	3	90	160	230	300	370	440	510	580
	4	120	190	260	330	400	470	540	610
	5	150	220	290	360	430	500	570	640
	6	180	250	320	390	460	530	600	670
	7	210	280	350	420	490	560	630	700
Quality Category		R		C		B		A	

The table below is used for the scoring of all EPs identified as new and emerging researchers. A new and emerging researcher awarded a score of two for their ERE component and a one or zero in their CRE component, will have their total weighted score automatically rounded up from 140 or 170 to 200.

		0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	ERE Component Score								
CRE Component Score	**0**	0	70	**200**	210	280	350	420	490
	1	30	100	**200**	240	310	380	450	520
	2	60	130	200	270	340	410	480	550
	3	90	160	230	300	370	440	510	580
	4	120	190	260	330	400	470	540	610
	5	150	220	290	360	430	500	570	640
	6	180	250	320	390	460	530	600	670
	7	210	280	350	420	490	560	630	700
Quality Category		**R(NE)**		**C(NE)**		**B**		**A**	

What are the Quality Categories?

While the following descriptors provide a useful reference point, they are generalised in approach. In determining or assigning Quality Categories, panels will be guided by the overall principle of a holistic assessment and will carry out a detailed reassessment of EPs where they meet the relevant criteria.

The Quality Categories have been revised to reflect changes to the definition of research and clarified understandings of research excellence and impact.

Quality Categories A, B, C, and R can be awarded to the EPs of any PBRF-eligible staff members with 1, 2, or 3 EREs in their Evidence Portfolios.

Quality Categories A, B, C(NE), and R (NE) can be awarded to the EPs of New and Emerging PBRF-eligible staff members with 1, 2, or 3 EREs in their Evidence Portfolios.

Quality Category A

The panel considers that as a whole the EP contains evidence of activity that is recognised by peers as outstanding, representing the leading-edge in its field (including if appropriate through international publication or dissemination), demonstrates very significant contributions to the research environment, and/or has led to very significant impact.

› Research outputs are recognised by peers as leading-edge for the field in terms of their originality, rigour, and significance and/or in terms of the reach and significance of their impact.

› Research-related activities demonstrate very significant outcomes from collaboration, dissemination and/or engagement within or outside academic domains; they may have delivered very significant impacts, with considerable reach, and where relevant have gained the highest level of recognition from peers, which may also include peers within industry, communities, iwi, hapū, marae, the public and third sectors, and/ or professional practice.

› Research environment contributions demonstrate very significant contributions to the vitality and sustainability of the research culture and environment, which is likely to occur beyond the field of research.

This Quality Category can be awarded to the EPs of all PBRF-eligible staff members.

Quality Category B

The panel considers that as a whole the EP contains evidence of activity which is recognised by peers as high-quality within its field (including if appropriate through international recognition), demonstrates significant contributions to the research environment, and/or has led to significant impact.

› Research outputs are recognised by peers as high quality for the field in terms of their originality, rigour, and significance and/or in terms of the reach and significance of their impact.

› Research-related activities demonstrate significant outcomes from collaboration, dissemination and/or engagement either within or outside academic domains; they may have delivered significant impacts with reach, and where relevant have gained recognition from peers which may also include peers within industry, communities, iwi, hapū, marae, the public and third sectors, and/or professional practice.

› Research environment contributions demonstrate significant contributions to the vitality and sustainability of the research culture and environment.

This Quality Category can be awarded to the EPs of all PBRF-eligible staff members.

Quality Category C

The panel considers that as a whole the EP contains evidence of activity which is recognised by peers as having met quality-assurance standards within its field (including if appropriate through international recognition), demonstrates some contributions to the research environment and/or has led to some impact.

› Research outputs are recognised by peers as meeting the quality standards of the field in terms of their originality, rigour, and significance, and/or demonstrate impact which is limited in terms of reach or significance.

› Research-related activities demonstrate some outcomes from collaboration, dissemination and/or engagement either within or outside academic domains; they may have delivered moderate impacts and where relevant may have gained some recognition by peers, which may also include peers within industry, communities, iwi, hapū, marae, the public and third sectors, and/or professional practice.

› Research environment contributions demonstrate some contributions to the vitality and sustainability of the research culture and environment.

This Quality Category can be awarded to the EPs of all PBRF-eligible staff members **except** for new and emerging researchers.

Quality Category C(NE)

The panel considers that as a whole the EP contains evidence of activity which is recognised by peers as having met quality-assurance standards within its field (including if appropriate through international recognition), and/or has led to some impact. The EP may contain evidence of contributions to the research environment.

› Research outputs are recognised by peers as meeting the quality standards of the field in terms of their originality, rigour, and significance, and/or demonstrate impact which is limited in terms of reach or significance.

› Research-related activities demonstrate some outcomes from collaboration, dissemination and/or engagement either within or outside academic domains; they may have delivered moderate impacts and where relevant may have gained some recognition by peers, which may also include peers within industry, communities, iwi, hapū, marae, the public and third sectors, and/or professional practice.

› Research environment contributions, if present, demonstrate some contributions to the vitality and sustainability of the research culture and environment.

This Quality Category can only be awarded to the EPs of new and emerging researchers.

Quality Category R

An EP will be assigned an R when the evidence included does not demonstrate the quality standard required for a Quality Category C or higher.
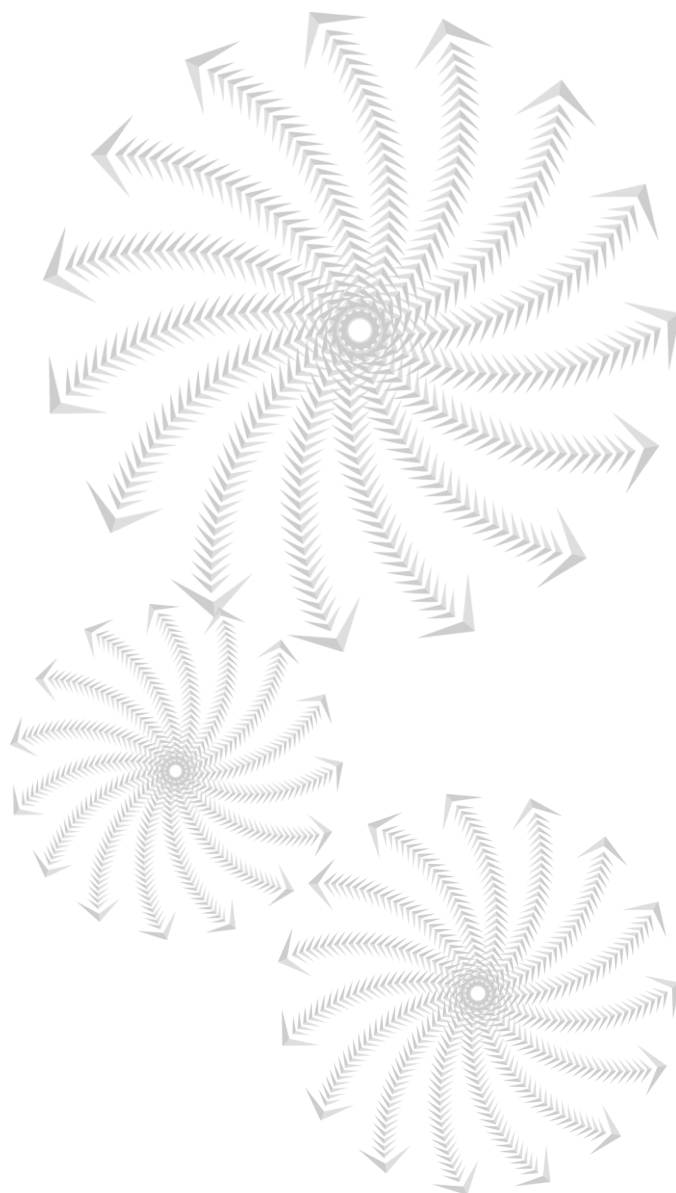
Quality Category R(NE)

An EP will be assigned an R(NE) when the evidence included does not demonstrate the quality standard required for a Quality Category C(NE) or higher.

This Quality Category can only be awarded to the EPs of new and emerging researchers.

Quality Evaluation 2026

What are the stages of the assessment process?

The panel assessment process

The process of assessing an Evidence Portfolio (EP) starts with the assignment of the EP to panellists and ends with the panel determining a Final Quality Category. A diagram of the assessment process is included at the end of this section.

› Quality Evaluation 2026 uses a **points-based scoring system** with a range from zero to seven to allocate scores to the two components of an EP. The ERE component is weighted at 70 percent of the total score and the CRE component is weighted at 30 percent of the total score.

› Six different **Quality Categories** can be assigned by a panel: A, B, C, C(NE), R and R(NE). The first four Quality Categories (A, B, C, C(NE)) attract funding and are reported.

› The assessment is a six-stage process conducted in two phases:

— First, the pre-panel-meeting assessment process where:

▪ Panel Co-Chairs assign EPs to panel members for assessment and scoring, with a lead and second assessor for each EP. EPs are assigned to ensure that all declared conflicts of interest are managed.

▪ **preparatory** scores for the ERE and CRE components are determined individually by each pair of assigned panel members, and possibly also cross-referred panel members

▪ **preliminary** scores for the ERE and CRE components are determined collectively by the two primary panel members (panel-pair) after consultation with each other. This consultation may include input from any cross-referred panel members. An Indicative Quality Category will be automatically assigned in the IT system based on the Preliminary component scores.

— Second, the panel meeting assessment process where:

▪ calibrated panel scores are determined for each of the two components based on the calibration of the previous scores. A Calibrated Quality Category will be automatically assigned in the IT system based on these calibrated component scores

▪ a Holistic Quality Category may be determined based on a detailed reassessment for some EPs

▪ a Final Quality Category is confirmed for each EP submitted to the panel.

› In deciding on the assignment of a Quality Category to an EP, panels will need to ensure their decisions are defensible.

Assigning Evidence Portfolios to panel members

Panel Co-Chairs will assign EPs to two panel members (panel-pair) for pre-meeting assessment and scoring.

In allocating EPs to panel members, the Co-Chairs will have regard to:

› the expertise of the panel members in the subject areas in which the staff member is being assessed

› any declared conflicts of interest

› achieving a balance of workload across panel members.

Panel Co-Chairs will designate one member of the panel-pair as lead assessor for that EP.

Calibration in the context of the Quality Evaluation assessment is the process where panel members align their judgements (as individuals and as a panel) against the ERE component and the CRE component scoring descriptors.

Calibration occurs in a number of ways:

• as part of the training of panels

• the discussions that occur as part of a panel-pair, and with the cross-referral assessors where needed

• the discussions that occur as part of a whole panel meeting.

Panels can make adjustments to scoring through the different stages of the assessment process as a result of this calibration.

The lead panel member will:

› coordinate the discussion with the other assigned panel member during the Preliminary scoring stage

› if cross-referral has taken place

  – consider Preparatory scores and comments provided as a result of cross-referral

  – include the cross-referral assessor in the discussion to determine the Preliminary component scores in all cases where a difference in preparatory scoring could impact on the Quality Category result

› record any discussion points with other panel members and any cross-referral assessors involved in the assessment

› lead any discussion on that EP at the panel meeting.

The Co-Chairs will assign themselves a number of EPs to ensure they are able to work with each member of the panel. The Co-Chairs will be the second assessors on these EPs. This will be part of the calibration process.

If an EP has been submitted by a TEO for a Co-Chair, the other Co-Chair will assign this EP to the appropriate panel members.

The panel Co-Chairs will also, if necessary, determine whether any part or parts of the EP will be cross-referred to another peer review panel, or if the whole EP will be transferred to another panel.

Cross-referring an Evidence Portfolio to the Mātauranga Māori panel and the Pacific Research panel

An EP can be cross-referred to the Mātauranga Māori panel and the Pacific Research panel in two ways:

› by the TEO including a Mātauranga Māori or Pacific Research cross-referral request in the EP, or

› at the request of the Co-Chairs of the panel to which the EP was submitted.

If the Co-Chairs of a panel request a cross-referral, they will provide specific advice on which part or parts of an EP need to be considered. The decision on whether a cross-referral is accepted is made by the Co-Chairs of the panel(s) receiving the cross-referral.

Cross-referring an Evidence Portfolio to another panel for assessment

A request for an EP to be cross-referred to any panel other than Mātauranga Māori or Pacific Research can **only** be made by the Co-Chairs of the panel the EP is assigned to.

Normally, panel Co-Chairs will seek a cross-referral for an EP to another panel (or other panels) when a significant proportion, but not a majority, of the ERE Outputs, Supplementary Items, or OERES in the ERE component fall within the subject areas covered by the other panel(s).

Cross-referral may also be appropriate when one or more of the ERE Outputs fall within the subject areas covered by another panel.

The Co-Chairs of the assigned panel will provide specific advice on which part or parts of an EP need to be considered in the cross-referral assessment.

The decision on whether the cross-referral is accepted is made by the Co-Chairs of the panel or panels receiving the cross-referral.

Transferring an Evidence Portfolio to another panel

Participating tertiary education organisations (TEOs) will have selected a panel, subject area and provided a primary field of research for each EP submitted to the TEC. The panel Co-Chairs will review this information as part of the assignment process, as well as any conflicts of interest related to the EP. The Co-Chairs may also review the EREs submitted if necessary, to make a decision regarding the assignment or possible transfer of an EP.

Panel Co-Chairs can seek a transfer of the EP to another panel through the TEC for several reasons including, but not limited to, the following:
› the primary subject area of research falls within the coverage of another panel
› a conflict of interest exists within the primary panel that cannot be resolved within the primary panel
› the relevant subject-area expertise resides in a different panel.

The TEC will transfer an EP to another panel based on the recommendation of the panel Co-Chairs and advice may be sought from other panel Co-Chairs or the Co-Moderators, or both. The TEC will make the final decision on the transfer of an EP to another panel, changing the subject area, and recording the reason for the transfer.

The new panel is responsible for assessing and reporting on the EP and the EP may be cross-referred to the original panel for additional input if the panel Co-Chairs agree that this is required.

The submitting TEO will be notified if an EP is transferred to another panel as part of the reporting of results. The notification will include the reason(s) for the transfer.

Pre-meeting assessment and scoring

Panel members are required to work within the established policies, guidelines and procedures for the PBRF and within the specific guidelines for their particular panel.

Panel members are responsible for assessing the EPs assigned to them, and they are required to:
› follow the assessment process
› advise the Co-Chairs if they have any conflicts of interest that prevent them from assessing any of the EPs assigned to them
› review all the material in the EPs assigned to them
› review or request any of the ERE Outputs, as required
› if necessary, advise the panel Co-Chairs that a cross-referral assessment may be required
› determine and record in the PBRF IT System Preparatory ERE and CRE component scores for each assigned EP, using the PBRF assessment policies, the descriptors and tie-points for each component, the panel-specific guidelines, and taking into account any advice from the Moderators

› maintain confidentiality in relation to all material in, and discussions relating to, the EPs reviewed.

Determining Preparatory scores

Each member of the panel-pair an EP is assigned to is required to determine and record a set of Preparatory scores for both components of an EP.

The Preparatory scores are determined independently of any other member of the panel.

A cross-referral panel member assigned to an EP also determines and records a Preparatory score for one or both of the components of the EP, depending on the request provided by the panel Co-Chairs. The cross-referral panel member must also provide a commentary along with the score(s) for their assessment. This commentary must include confirmation of the part(s) of the EP that were assessed and provide a rationale for the component score(s) provided.

Determining Preliminary scores

The panel-pair assigned to work together on an EP will discuss the Preparatory scores they have each given to the EP, then determine and record one set of component Preliminary scores for that EP.

If the EP has been cross-referred to another panel, the panel-pair will include the cross-referral assessor in the discussion to determine the Preliminary component scores in all cases where a difference in scoring could impact on the Quality Category result.

The Preliminary scores are determined after calibration of their Preparatory scores, including those from the panel-pair and any cross-referral panel members. It is possible for changes (higher or lower) to be made to the Preliminary component scores as a result of the panel members' calibration of the Preparatory scores against the tie-point descriptors.

If agreement cannot be reached on Preliminary scores, the lead panel member will identify the EP as 'decline to score'. This means that the EP will go directly to the Calibrated panel component score stage at the panel meeting. No Preliminary scores will be recorded.

Deriving Indicative Quality Categories

When a set of Preliminary component scores are recorded, the PBRF IT System will derive an Indicative Quality Category for that EP using the total weighted score. This is not the Final Quality Category that an EP will receive, as it is the result of only partially calibrated scoring.

The PBRF IT System will automatically make changes to scoring for the C(NE) Quality Category for new and emerging researchers where appropriate at this stage in the assessment process. This is the only difference in the scoring process for new and emerging researchers.

Panel meeting assessment and scoring

The final stages of the assessment process occur at the panel meeting.

Panel members are required to:
› prepare for and attend the panel meeting
› follow the assessment process

> › confirm they have no conflicts of interest that prevent them from participating in the panel discussions
>
> › maintain confidentiality in relation to all material in, and discussions relating to, the EPs reviewed.

EP calibration check

As part of their oversight of the panel-pair assessment phase, the Moderation Team will receive regularly-updated initial scoring data. The Moderation Team will review initial scoring data for any significant variation between scores given to EPs with fewer than three EREs and scores given to EPs with three EREs. Any concerns will be flagged with Panel Co-Chairs.

Ahead of the panel meetings, panels will receive average component scores and analysis comparing EPs with three EREs against the different groups of EPs that have fewer than three EREs.

During the panel meeting, where meaningful variation is observed (likely to vary across panels) the panel will carry out specific calibration of the various groups against each other, as part of the calibration process, to ensure that ERE quantity has not informed scoring.

While Panel Co-Chairs will determine how the EP calibration process occurs within the panel, and what degree of score variation will be considered 'meaningful' in the context of that panel, the TEC will ensure that the EP calibration process does take place across all panels and that the same standard of scrutiny occurs.

Determining Calibrated Panel component scores

At the panel meetings, panel members will discuss and calibrate Preliminary component scores against the tie-point descriptors. This process uses EPs submitted to the panel that are considered exemplars of the standards to ensure that the panel is in agreement on the Calibrated Panel component scores. These scores are recorded in the PBRF IT System.

It is possible for changes (higher or lower) to be made to the Calibrated Panel component scores as a result of the panel's calibration of the Preliminary component scores against the tie-point descriptors.

The panel will determine the Calibrated Panel component scores for any EPs where the panel-pair declined to score at the Preliminary scoring stage.

Deriving Calibrated Panel Quality Categories

The TEC's PBRF IT System will derive a Calibrated Panel Quality Category for each EP when a set of Calibrated Panel component scores are recorded.

It is expected that for the majority of EPs the Calibrated Panel Quality Category will become the Final Quality Category as changes at the detailed reassessment stage are primarily for exceptions.

Determining Holistic Quality Categories

Holistic Quality Categories are determined through detailed reassessment at panel meetings. The purpose of the detailed reassessment is to determine which of the available Quality Categories is most appropriate for an EP, by taking all relevant factors into consideration. It is expected that most EPs will not require detailed reassessment.

Criteria for Evidence Portfolios to be considered for detailed reassessment

The panel will be required to undertake a detailed reassessment of the Calibrated Panel Quality Category assigned to their EPs where the panel has determined that those EPs meet either of the criteria below:

› The panel identifies that the EP has specific quality issues that are uncommon relative to subject-area norms such as unusual research outputs, activities, or the presence or absence of CRE item types

› In relation to the CRE component only, the panel identifies that the EP has specific quantity issues that are uncommon relative to subject-area norms such as an unusually low or high number of CRE items or particular types relative to career stage.

› The panel identifies specific scoring concerns which may include significant differences in scoring either by the panel-pair or cross-referral assessors, unusual scoring combinations like a low ERE component score but a high CRE component score, or where a panellist believes the raw component scores may not accurately represent the overall quality of the EP.

Panel Co-Chairs will have the discretionary ability to refer any EP for detailed reassessment in exceptional circumstances where EPs do not meet any of the criteria but the Panel Co-Chairs consider that there are strong reasons for detailed reassessment.

EPs with a total weighted Calibrated Panel score greater than 70 points (one ERE component score) from a boundary that do not meet any of these criteria would not normally be considered for detailed reassessment.

Panel considerations at detailed reassessment stage

Panels are required to determine whether the Calibrated Panel Quality Category awarded to each EP identified for detailed reassessment are consistent with the Quality Category descriptors, and other EPs assigned those categories, when all relevant factors and information from the EP are considered holistically.

The panel will take the following information into account when making a decision to change a Quality Category as part of the detailed reassessment process:

› the Quality Category descriptors and the Quality Categories arising out of each of the stages of the assessment process are consistent when looking at all information presented in the EP

› the scoring of the ERE and CRE components at each of the stages of the assessment process

› the information set out in the Platform of Research – Contextual Summary

The panel will then determine and confirm a Holistic Quality Category for each EP assessed as part of this process. Holistic Quality Categories are recorded in the PBRF IT System for all EPs.

The Holistic Quality Category may or may not be different from the Calibrated Panel Quality Category. If the Holistic Quality Category is different, it may be higher or lower than the Calibrated Panel Quality Category and panels will record the factors that influenced their decision. This information will be available to staff members who request their detailed results.

There is no requirement for the component scores and Quality Category to be in agreement if the detailed reassessment of an EP produces a different result.

Assigning Final Quality Categories

Following the determination of any Holistic Quality Categories, panels will confirm the Final Quality Category recorded in the PBRF IT System for each EP.
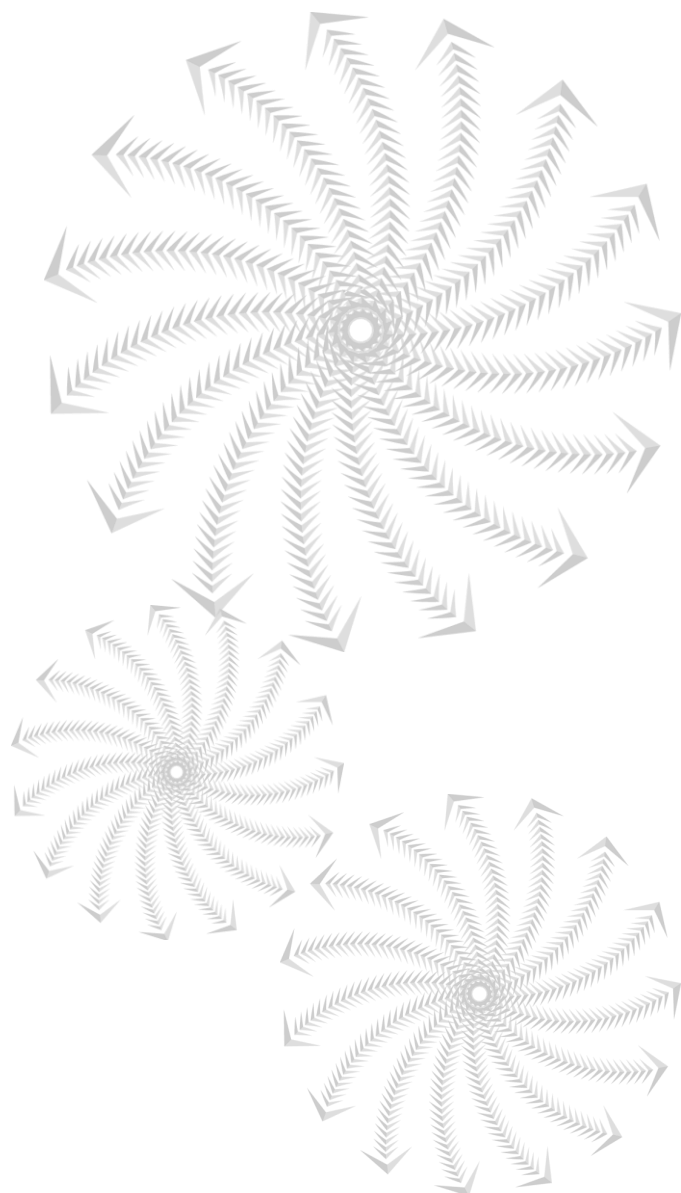
Quality Evaluation 2026

Assessing Examples of Research Excellence

Assessing the Examples of Research Excellence component

The Examples of Research Excellence (ERE) component is the basis for the peer review panel's assessment of the quality of research outcomes and activities presented in an EP. The primary focus of assessment are the individual Examples of Research Excellence (ERE).

›   The ERE component is weighted at 70 percent of the total score given to the staff member's Evidence Portfolio (EP).

›   Each research output included in the ERE component must be eligible for submission which means:

   —   it meets the PBRF Definition of Research

   —   the final version of any research output included in the EP, including confidential outputs, was first made available in the public domain during the assessment period (**1 January 2018 – 31 December 2025**)

   —   it can be provided for assessment by the peer review panel (for ERE Outputs) or audit (ERE Outputs, Supplementary Items and OEREs).

General principles for assessing the ERE component

The following general principles apply to the assessment of research outputs:

›   Excellent research in Aotearoa New Zealand draws on diverse ontological, epistemological, and methodological traditions of critical inquiry, experimentation, and knowledge-creation.

›   This includes Māori ways of knowing, being, and conducting rangahau such as kaupapa Māori and mātauranga Māori; diverse Pacific ways of knowing, being, and conducting research; and work that embodies new insights of direct relevance to the specific needs of iwi, hapū, marae, communities, government, scholarship and teaching, industry, and commerce, which may be developed through collaborative and practice-led processes involving stakeholders from those constituencies.

›   All types of research output will be considered on their merits and one type of research is not considered to be of greater quality than another because of the nature of the output type (for example, a performance is not considered of lesser standing than a publication in a journal or vice versa).

›   The absence of quality assurance for an output will not automatically be taken to imply low quality.

Allocating scores to the ERE component

The following tables provide a detailed description of the ERE component, and the tie-point descriptors for the scores of six, four and two. This information must be used to assign a score to the ERE component of the EP.

> *A score of at least two for the ERE component is required for the award of a C or C(NE) Quality Category. The panel's detailed reassessment, however, may over-ride this.*

ERE component descriptor

Component	Examples of Research Excellence (ERE)
Descriptor	This component is concerned with the quality of research and research-related activity, including research impact. As part of the evidence in this component, EPs will ordinarily include three EREs. EPs submitted by New and Emerging, part-time, and/or staff with Researcher Circumstances may include fewer EREs depending on the circumstance or combination of circumstances. Each ERE will comprise:

> › **a contextual narrative** (required) which summarises the key discoveries, innovations, contributions, and/or impacts the ERE demonstrates, and which can link together the ERE output with any Supplementary Items.
>
> › an ERE Output (required) which must be submitted for assessment
>
> › up to three optional **Supplementary Items**, which can be related research outputs and/or research activities which are briefly described along with bibliometric or equivalent details sufficient to enable audit.

EPs may also include up to eight Other Examples of Research Excellence (OEREs), which may be either research outputs or activities.

In scoring the ERE component, the number of total EREs and/or OEREs, and the number, presence or absence of any supplementary items within each ERE, has no bearing on the assessment of quality.

Research outputs are any form of assessable output which embody research findings and are generated out of research activity meeting the PBRF Definition of Research, and may include:

> › published or otherwise disseminated academic work such as scholarly books, journal articles, Master's or doctoral theses, or presentations
>
> › published or otherwise disseminated creative work that embodies original research such as works of fiction, artworks, or compositions.
>
> › publicly available or confidential work that embodies original research such as reports, policies, legislation, or designs
>
> › work published or otherwise disseminated in digital, visual, audio, or other non-print media including computer programs, waiata, carving, buildings
>
> › other forms of outputs such as granted patents, materials, products, performances, orations, and exhibitions.

Research activities describe activity concerned with the planning, preparation, production, dissemination and sharing of research meeting the PBRF Definition of Research. **Research activities** also include activity and outcomes associated with the recognition and impact of research, and may include:

> › presentation or sharing of research outputs, outcomes, or work in progress in scholarly, industry or sector-based, iwi, community or public fora. Examples might include academic, industry or professional conference presentations, public lectures or seminars, hui, fono, workshops, presentations or displays
> › external support for research projects and activity, including competitive or other funding, contracts or commissions, public or private sector collaborations or partnerships, and community, iwi, or marae support
> › recognition of research activity and/or outputs in the form of fellowships, prizes, awards, secondments, appointments or elections to relevant roles, honours or other indicators of peer or external esteem
> › outreach and engagement activity concerned with engaging with and contributing to non-academic communities and stakeholder groups. Examples might include evidence of research impact meeting the PBRF definition of research impact through uptake and use of or engagement with, research outputs or activities. Examples of impact might include legislative, regulatory, or policy changes, economic or commercial outcomes or benefits including products, practices and processes, social, health, environmental or cultural benefits or changes, or other changes to services or quality of life, at all levels from the global to the local community.

The EP may include research which is pure, basic, theoretical, applied, creative, community, or practice-based, so long as it meets the PBRF Definition of Research. All types and modes of research will be considered equal and no quality distinctions should be made on that basis.

The absence of quality assurance will not of itself be taken to imply low quality but the onus is on the submitter to provide evidence of quality. Evidence of research outputs having been reviewed through peers is one measure of quality, noting that the appropriate peers and peer review processes may in some contexts or fields be external to the academy. Other quality-assurance processes, including but not limited to referees, commissioning processes, and community, iwi or marae endorsement will also be given regard.

Review processes may cause overlap between the ERE and CRE components. Assessors need to ensure that they adequately differentiate between review outcomes as they relate to evidencing of quality-assurance process for core research outputs submitted in the ERE component (for example evidence of peer review of the output), and review activity or outcomes (for example awards, prizes, funding, invitations to present research) that may be presented either as supplementary or OERE research activities or as part of the CRE component. Most of the assessment time should be spent on the ERE component.

ERE component tie-points

ERE component tie-point descriptors		
Scores	**7**	
	6	The EP demonstrates a body of leading-edge research outputs and/or activities that is recognised by peers as ranking with the best of its kind in terms of its originality, rigour, and significance, and/or in terms of the reach and significance of its impact.
		EREs, including ERE Outputs and any Supplementary Items, likely represent significant intellectual or creative advances, contributions to the formation of new paradigms, novel conceptual or theoretical analysis or theories, the recovery or revitalisation of significant knowledges, highly novel or creative practical applications or syntheses of research, or other important new or creative findings with wider implications. EREs may evidence research that has delivered very significant impact that has either wide-ranging reach across multiple stakeholders, or has achieved profound depth of change or benefit, or both.
		Outputs could demonstrate research that is exemplary or at the leading edge in its field, highly innovative, has significance beyond its field or across fields, or all of the above. They would be expected to demonstrate the highest levels of intellectual rigour, imaginative insight or methodological skill, and/or to form a primary point of reference to be disseminated widely.
		A significant proportion of research outputs should be presented through the most appropriate and best channels relative to the field or topics of research.
		Where relevant, research and research-related activities may have gained the highest level of recognition from peers, which may also include peers within industry, communities, iwi, hapū, marae, the public and third sectors, and/ or professional practice.
		Research-related activities likely demonstrate very significant outcomes from collaboration, dissemination, and/or engagement with the leading or most relevant representative groups and bodies within or outside academic domains. They may have delivered impacts which may be either very significant, have extensive reach potentially across multiple beneficiary groups, or both. Such impacts could include significant changes in professional, policy, organisational, artistic, or research practices, commercial developments, processes, and applications, or other outcomes which have significant benefits for public stakeholder groups, private sector or commercial enterprises, or communities.

5	
4	The EP demonstrates a body of research outputs and/or activities that is recognised as high-quality in terms of its originality, rigour, and significance, and/or in terms of the reach and significance of its impact.
	EREs, including ERE Outputs and any Supplementary Items, likely represent substantial new ideas, interpretations, or critical findings, valuable contributions to existing paradigms, the recovery or revitalisation of knowledge, innovative practical applications or syntheses of research, or other new or creative findings. EREs may evidence research that has delivered significant impact; reach may be significant in terms of breadth or depth or both.
	Outputs could demonstrate research that is recognised as high quality and significant within its field. They would be expected to demonstrate a high level of intellectual rigour, insight or methodological skill, and may be a point of reference within the relevant field.
	Research outputs will typically be presented through reputable and appropriate channels relative to the field or topic of research.
	Where relevant, research and research-related activities may have gained recognition from peers, which may also include peers within industry, communities, iwi, hapū, marae, the public and third sectors, and/ or professional practice.
	Research-related activities may demonstrate some significant outcomes from collaboration, dissemination, and/or engagement with relevant representative groups and bodies within or outside academic domains. They may have delivered impacts which have achieved either reach or significance for a beneficiary group. Such impacts could include changes or contributions to changes in professional, policy, organisational, artistic, or research practices, commercial developments, processes, and applications, or other outcomes which have realised benefits for public stakeholder groups, private sector or commercial enterprises, or communities.

3	
2	The EP demonstrates a body of research outputs and/or activities that is recognised as meeting the minimum standards of originality, rigour, and significance relative to the field, and/or as having achieved some limited impact.
	EREs, including ERE Outputs and any Supplementary Items, likely represent some contributions to or developments on existing ideas, paradigms or interpretations, practical applications research, or other findings that have some significance within the field. EREs may evidence impact,

likely limited to small stakeholder groups and/or to a more superficial degree of change or benefit.

Outputs could demonstrate research that has a sound and justifiable methodology and is recognised as meeting minimum quality assurance standards within the field. Outputs should typically be presented through reputable channels relative to the field or topic of research.

Where relevant, research and research-related activities may have gained some limited recognition from peers, which may also include peers within industry, communities, iwi, hapū, marae, the public and third sectors, and/ or professional practice.

Research-related activities may demonstrate evidence of collaboration, dissemination, and/or engagement with representative groups and bodies within or outside academic domains; outcomes and impacts for specific beneficiary groups may be limited. Such impacts could occur within public, private, third sector or community contexts but are likely to be limited both in terms of significance and reach.

1	The EP demonstrates minimal evidence of research or research-related activity. The research presented is assessed as having limited or no originality, significance, or rigour, and has achieved little or no impact. EREs represent little or no additional contributions to or applications of knowledge. Research outputs demonstrate no or very limited contributions to understanding or insight in the discipline or field, or lack the appropriate application of theory or methods, or both. Research-related activities demonstrate very limited collaboration, dissemination, or engagement, with little evidence of outcomes or of peer recognition.
0	No evidence of research or research-related activity is presented.

Selecting, accessing and examining EREs

The assessment of EREs is the critical aspect of the Quality Evaluation assessment process.

› Panel members will primarily assess (examine) the ERE contextual narrative, the ERE Output, and any Supplementary Items. They may also consider any evidence submitted as supporting information for the ERE Output.

› If an EP has one or two EREs, peer review panels will examine all of these. If an EP has three EREs, panels will examine at least two out of three EREs. Where an EP has three EREs, panel members select which particular EREs they want to examine.

› All the ERE Outputs included in an EP will be available to a panel member either as a link to an electronic document or as a physical copy (provided on request).

› Panels do not examine Supplementary Items or OEREs in the same way as ERE Outputs.

Selecting an ERE for assessment

Panel members will examine EREs to determine the quality of the research. The ERE contextual narrative field of each ERE supports assessment by providing information on the nature and significance of the research, and the quality assurance process where this is necessary. The Individual Contribution field for the ERE Output also provides specific detail on the contribution the staff member has made to the research. This information may help panel members to determine which EREs they choose to examine in further detail.

If an EP has one or two EREs, panel members will examine all the ERE Outputs submitted. If an EP has three EREs, panels will examine at least two out of three ERE outputs. In EPs with three EREs, the number of ERE Outputs examined, and which EREs are selected for examination may vary for a variety of reasons including but not limited to:

› a cross-referral has been sought on an EP and assessment of a specific ERE has been requested

› confirming a particular ERE Output meets the PBRF Definition of Research

› there being serious doubt about the appropriate score for the ERE component of an EP; or there is a significant risk of an error of judgement being made (for example, there is uncertainty as to whether the quality of the ERE component is just above or just below a particular tie-point) if it is not examined

› when a significant proportion of ERE Outputs listed in the EP are non-quality-assured or are confidential

› confirming the quality of the ERE component, if there are additional questions after the examination of a particular ERE.

All research output types, including those identified as confidential, can be selected for examination. There is no requirement for the panel members responsible for assessing an EP to select the same EREs for examination. Panel members must ensure that all confidential research outputs are kept confidential.

> *It is the responsibility of submitting TEOs to ensure that all ERE Outputs submitted are accessible to panels for assessment. We do not require a full translation of ERE Outputs into English. If a TEO chooses to provide full or part translations, there is no requirement for these to be independently validated. The TEC will not organise or fund translation of research outputs for assessment purposes.*
>
> *While some panels may have the capacity and expertise to deal with research in languages that are not official Aotearoa New Zealand languages, in particular the Pacific panel, this should not be assumed for all panels. Panels are appointed for their expertise in assessment and their subject area knowledge. Panels are not expected or intended to necessarily have expertise in a range of languages.*

Accessing copies of selected ERE Outputs

Panel members will be able to access either:
› an electronic form of the ERE Output through a link in the EP, or
› a physical form of the ERE Output.

The EP will clearly identify whether the ERE Output is an electronic or physical form.

Issues with electronic links to ERE Outputs

If an electronic link to an ERE Output is not working, the panel member will need to contact the TEC to have it fixed. If it cannot be fixed the TEC will request an updated link or copy from the tertiary education organisation (TEO).

Requesting and accessing physical versions of ERE Outputs

If the TEO has indicated that there is only a physical version of the ERE Output available, the panel member will use the PBRF IT System to request that the ERE Output is provided to the TEC. A copy of the ERE Output will be requested from the relevant TEO through the PBRF IT System. When the ERE Output has been provided to the TEC by the TEO, the TEC will forward it to the panel member.

Requests for physical copies of ERE Outputs must be made within 15 days of the EP being assigned to a panel member. Once a request is made, TEOs have 15 days to provide the physical ERE Output to the TEC. It is therefore important that panel members check which of the EPs assigned to them do not have electronic ERE Outputs and determine as quickly as possible if they wish to request the physical outputs.

Some ERE Outputs (for example, installations) may require the panel member to visit a site to properly assess the ERE Output. The location details will be provided in the ERE Output.

If a physical version of an ERE Output is readily available to the panel member (for example, via their institution's library), the panel member can access a copy of the ERE Output themselves. Panel members must ensure that they are accessing the correct version of the ERE Output.

Examining selected ERE Outputs

Examination allows panel members to check and clarify the nature, integrity and general quality of the ERE outputs.

Examining in this context is defined as applying a level of scrutiny that allows the panel member to make an informed judgement about the overall quality (and score for) the ERE component of the EP. This could be achieved by either reading an ERE Output in full, substantially or sufficiently to make that assessment, or an equivalent level of scrutiny for those ERE Outputs that are not in a written form.

Panel members are not expected to undertake a full, in-depth, rigorous and critical analysis of each ERE Output selected for examination, as they would if they were conducting a formal peer review.

What needs to be considered when examining ERE Outputs?

When examining an ERE Output, the following questions should be considered:

›   Is the research methodology clear, rigorous and appropriate – or, in some cases, innovative and ground-breaking?

›   What kind of original contribution does the ERE Output make to human knowledge, understanding, or creativity (for example, theoretical, conceptual, empirical, practical, or artistic)?

›   What is the impact, reach, or significance of the ERE Output?

In considering these questions, panel member's assessments need to be based upon a clear and consistent understanding and application of the PBRF Definition of Research and the considerations outlined in the Panel-Specific Guidance for their panel.

Recording that a ERE Output has been examined

Each panel member must record in the PBRF IT System which EREs Outputs they have examined.

Recording that an ERE Output has been examined means that it has been assessed and included in the panel member's decision on the scoring of the ERE component.

If the panel member accesses an ERE but it is not included in their assessment and scoring decision (for example, because the evidence is inappropriate for assessment) then the panellist **must not** record it as examined.

What if there are other problems with ERE Outputs?

If an ERE Output is not of sufficient quality to be examined, or does not meet the evidence requirements for the research output type, the panel member is not required to assess it. The panel member should apply their judgement based on the information that is available to them. Panel members cannot request an updated or revised version of an ERE Output or any additional material.

If panel members have concerns about the eligibility any research output included in the ERE component, or about the validity of particular aspects of an output (for example, the authorship or the contribution of the staff member in question), or find mistakes in the information provided, the panel member can submit an Audit Concern through the PBRF IT System. These concerns will be checked by the TEC's audit team. This applies to ERE Outputs, Supplementary Items, and OEREs.
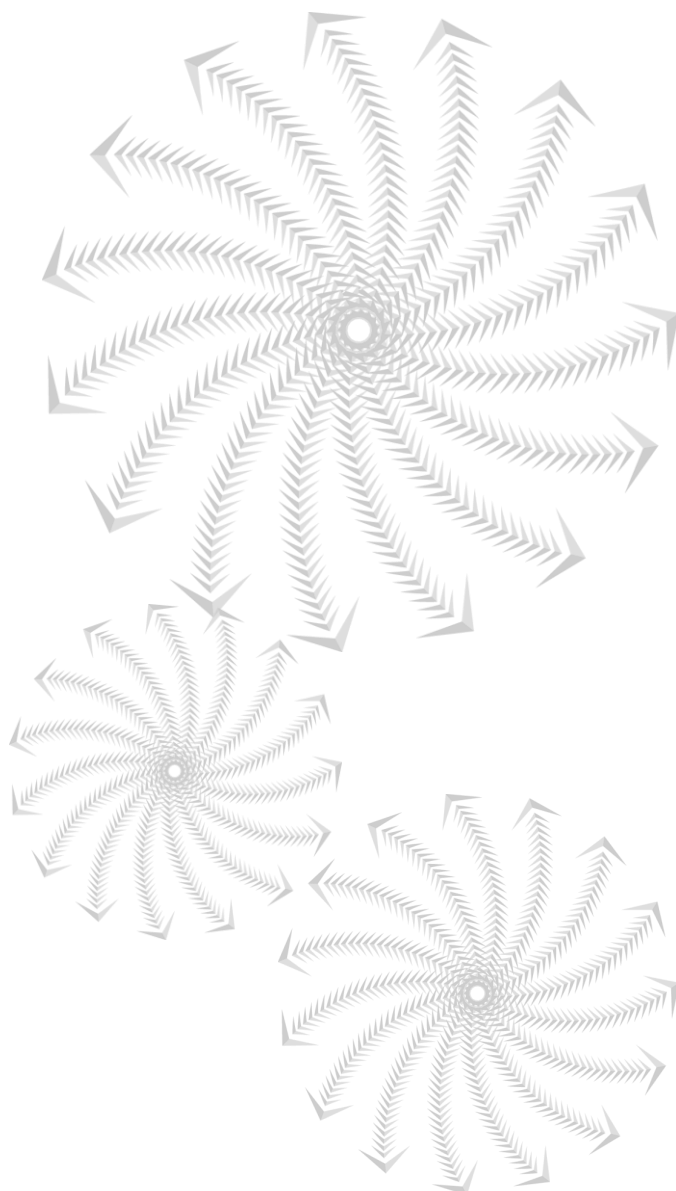
Quality Evaluation 2026

Assessing Contributions to the Research Environment

Assessing the Contributions to the Research Environment component

The Contributions to the Research Environment (CRE) component describes the research-related contributions the staff member has made to sustaining, developing, and/or growing the research environment and culture.

›   The CRE component has a weighting of 30 percent of the total score for the EP.

›   Each EP contains a minimum of one CRE item and may contain up to ten items. The EPs of new and emerging researchers can be submitted without CRE items.

›   The CRE component allows for recognition of activities and outcomes that are indicative of a vital, high-quality, sustainable research environment that may exist across academic, community, industrial, public, and commercial domains There are six CRE types.

General principles for assessing the CRE component

The following general principles apply to the assessment of CRE items:

›   all research-related activities and outcomes in the CRE component must have occurred within the assessment period (**1 January 2018 – 31 December 2025**)

›   all CRE types will be considered on their merit. This means no one specific type will be weighted higher than another

›   the CRE component should reflect the broad range of activities and outcomes that are undertaken and/or achieved by a researcher relative to opportunity, and be appropriate to an individual's research discipline

›   the items submitted within EPs will differ across the six CRE types.

Allocating scores to the Contributions to the Research Environment component

The following tables provide a detailed description of the CRE component, and the tie-point descriptors for the scores of six, four and two. This information must be used to assign a score to the CRE component of the EP.

> *A score of at least two on the CRE component is normally required for the award of a C Quality Category. The detailed reassessment, however, may over-ride this.*
>
> *An CRE component score of more than zero is not required for the award of a C(NE) Quality Category to a new and emerging researcher.*

CRE component descriptor

Component	Contributions to the Research Environment
Descriptor	This component is concerned with the contribution a staff member has made to sustaining, developing, and/or growing the research environment and culture of which they are a part. The component allows for recognition of activities and outcomes that are indicative of a vital, high-quality, sustainable research environment that may exist across academic, community, industrial, public, and commercial domains. Research environments and the activity that sustains and grows them may be local, regional, national or international in orientation.
	EPs will normally be expected to include a minimum of one and up to ten CRE items, unless the EP is submitted by a new and emerging researcher, in which case no CRE items are required. In scoring the CRE component, the number of CRE items submitted should have no bearing on the assessment of quality so long as the minimum of one item (where relevant) has been included.
	The component will recognise the following types of activity or outcome:
	› **Contributions to Research Discipline, Culture, and Environment** that demonstrate the staff member's contribution to the general development, sustainability, vitality or visibility of their discipline, field or the broader research environment, culture or capability both within and outside academic domains. Examples might include research leadership roles such as head of department, laboratory, centre, or institute director, institutional or other research related committee membership, activity related to establishing, validating, representing, raising awareness of, and advocating for the discipline or field, or acting in the 'critic and conscience' role.
	› **Facilitating, Networking and Collaboration** activity that demonstrates the staff member's contribution to the research environment specifically through developing and supporting research networks, groups, or collaborations that develop or sustain their discipline, field, or the broader research environment, culture or capability both within and outside academic domains. Examples might include setting up, leading, or contributing to research centres, groups, seminars, wānanga, fono, lecture series, reading groups, fora, or networks.
	› **Researcher Development, Capability-Building, and Mentoring** activity that demonstrates the staff member's contribution to developing and growing the research environment specifically through staff development, mentoring and support both within and outside academic domains. Examples might include formal mentoring roles, leadership roles and advocacy/representative roles for

particular career stages, or contributions to promotions processes and appointments panels.

› **Reviewing, Refereeing, Judging, Evaluating and Examining** activity that demonstrates the staff member's contributions to developing and sustaining their discipline or field through reviewing, refereeing, judging, evaluating and examining their peers. Invitations to undertake such activity may also indicate the staff member's standing and/or peer esteem within the discipline or field. Examples might include positions on editorial boards, publisher, journal, institutional or other peer-review roles, funding or awards panel membership.

› **Student Development and Support** activity which demonstrates the staff member's contributions to developing or growing research capacity and capability through supervision, mentoring, support, evaluation or review of research students, activity aimed at addressing equity and inclusivity issues including for Māori and Pacific research students in particular, as well as esteem and recognition factors associated with a staff member's research student supervisees.

› **Peer esteem and research recognition factors not included in ERE section**, including indicators associated with the staff member and/or work over the duration of a career rather than associated with a specific ERE or OERE. Examples might include prizes, awards, honours, elected roles or other indicators.

Panels recognise that the items submitted across the six CRE types will differ in kind depending on disciplinary norms and that inherent opportunities for research environment contributions will likewise vary across fields or disciplines.

It is not expected that evidence of contributions across all six types will be submitted, and neither will submission of evidence across a greater or lesser range of types form the sole basis for quality assessment. All six types of CRE are considered as equally valuable and as equally capable of producing the highest score.

CRE component tie points

CRE component tie-point descriptors

Scores	7	
	6	The EP demonstrates that the staff member makes a leading contribution to a sustainable research environment in New Zealand and/or internationally. This is likely to be shown through, for example:

> › research leadership at the highest levels (for example, membership of significant research selection and/or assessment panels nationally or internationally, leading major collaborative research centres, consortia, units, teams or other groups including initiatives at the highest level of Te Ao Māori, Pacific, and other communities, institutional or cross-institutional, national or international leadership roles including of research or professional membership organisations and bodies)
> › leading or contributing to the development of significant institutional, national, or international research capacity-building or support including infrastructure, services, collections, funds, fellowships
> › significant contributions to or leadership of research-focused conferences, stakeholder engagement, or attracting research funding or support;
> › attracting renowned scholars to the TEO and/or Aotearoa New Zealand
> › a consistent record of successful supervision of post-graduate students; contributions to developing new research capacity that go beyond student supervision, including for Māori and Pacific research students and researchers, and/or supporting research students to produce research outputs that are quality-assured;
> › contributions to knowledge in the discipline through editorship positions, membership of editorial panels or refereeing of top-ranked journals.

The staff member may have a public profile either nationally or internationally as a consequence of their expertise in their field or discipline, and may regularly provide expert public commentary or raise awareness of the role or value of their discipline or field.

	5	
	4	The EP demonstrates that the staff member makes a strong contribution to a high-quality, sustainable research environment in New Zealand and/or internationally. This is likely to be shown through, for example:

> › research leadership which may include membership of research selection and/or assessment panels nationally or internationally, membership or participation in collaborative research centres, consortia, units, teams or other groups, institutional or cross-institutional, national or international leadership roles including of research or professional membership organisations and bodies)

> › contributing to the development of institutional research capacity-building or support including infrastructure, services, collections, funds, fellowships
> › contributions to research-focused conferences, stakeholder engagement, or attracting research funding or support;
> › attracting renowned scholars to the TEO and/or Aotearoa New Zealand
> › a record of successful supervision of post-graduate students; contributions to other research student development, mentoring, and support initiatives including for Māori and Pacific research students, and/or supporting research students to produce research outputs that are quality-assured
> › contributions to knowledge in the discipline through editorship positions, membership of editorial panels or peer review roles at high-quality journals.

The staff member may have a developing public profile as a consequence of their expertise in their field or discipline, and may have provided expert public commentary or raised awareness of the role or value of their discipline or field.

3	
2	The EP demonstrates that the staff member has made some contribution to a high-quality, sustainable research environment in their discipline or field at an organisational or national level. This is likely to be shown through, for example: › participation in research centres, consortia, units, teams or other groups within their specific discipline or at the institutional level; › contributions to the institutional research environment through membership of relevant committees or discipline-related bodies; › contributions to research-focused conferences or seminars, or to stakeholder engagement activity; › the successful supervision of post-graduate students, including Māori and Pacific research students; › contributions to knowledge in the discipline through membership of editorial panels or peer review roles at journals that are recognised within the discipline or field. The staff member may have had some experience of providing public commentary as a consequence of their specific research expertise.
1	The EP demonstrates minimal evidence of contribution to the staff member's research environment. Any activity is likely to be limited to the departmental or sub-organisational level, or to platforms and events that are not well-recognised within the discipline or field. There may limited or no evidence of research student supervision or support.
0	No evidence of contributions to the research environment is presented.
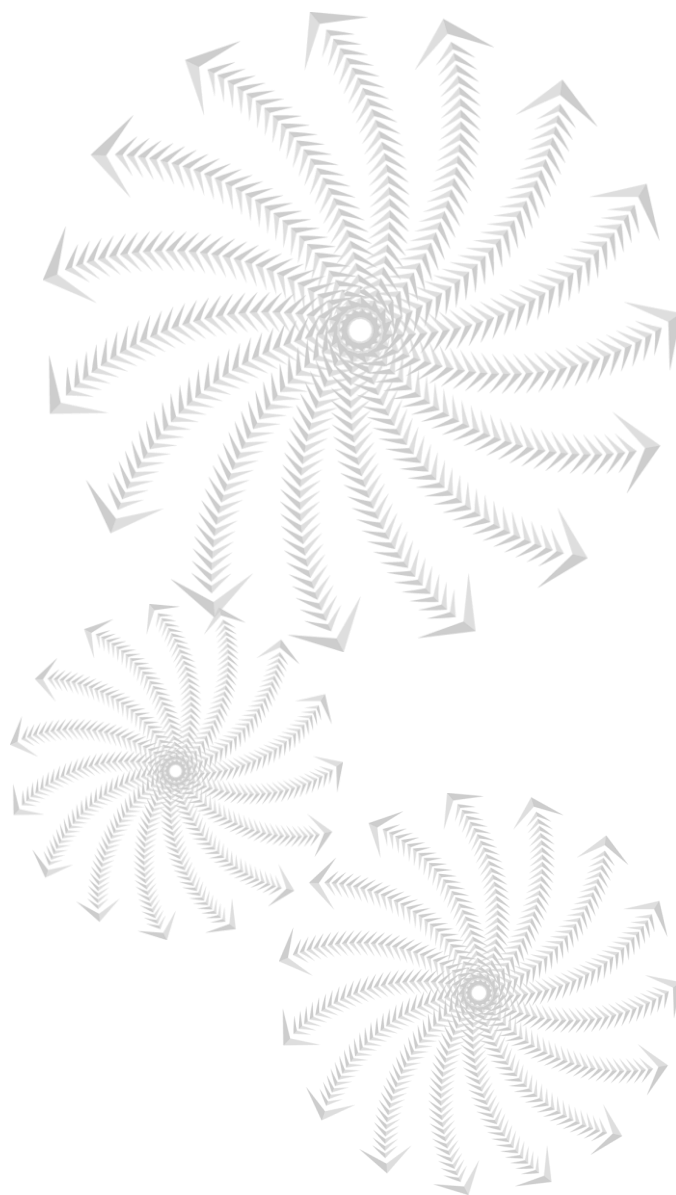
Quality Evaluation 2026

What is the moderation process?

The moderation process

The function of moderation is to ensure that standards are consistent across peer review panels and that the PBRF Guidelines are properly adhered to.

› The Moderation Panel consists of the Co-Moderator, Co-Moderator Māori, Deputy Moderator Pacific, and the 28 peer review panel Co-Chairs. The Moderation Panel is supported by the TEC's Moderation Panel Advisor.

› The structure of the Moderation Panel also provides a support mechanism for panel Co-Chairs.

The TEC has made changes to the person specifications and structure of the Moderation team for the Quality Evaluation 2026. These changes reflect the recommendations of the SRG on how to implement Cabinet's decisions on the PBRF Review.

In the 2018 round, the Moderation team included a Principal Moderator and two Deputy Moderators. For 2026, this has been changed to a structure that includes a Co-Moderator, a Co-Moderator Māori, and a Deputy Moderator Pacific.

The person specifications and roles have also been changed to better reflect the new PBRF Principles and the TEC's commitment under the Education and Training Act 2020 to honour its obligations under Te Tiriti o Waitangi and to uphold Māori-Crown partnership:

› Partnership: the PBRF should reflect the bicultural nature of Aotearoa New Zealand and the special role and status of the Treaty of Waitangi / Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

› Equity and Inclusiveness, ensuring equitable outcomes and that the PBRF encourages and recognises the full diversity of ontologies, epistemologies, knowledges, and methodologies in Aotearoa New Zealand.

This change also aligns with the recommendation of the Quality Evaluation 2018 *Report of the Moderation Panel and Peer Review Panel* that the TEC should consider appointing a Māori Moderator. The report noted that panels would have benefitted from better advice on interpreting and assessing research of relevance to Māori.

Purpose of the moderation process

The moderation process is designed to promote systematic reflection on the issues of consistency, standards and cross-panel calibration by:

› creating an environment in which the judgements of the peer review panels generate consistency on a cross-panel basis, while at the same time not reducing the panel judgements to a mechanistic application of the assessment criteria

› providing an opportunity for independent review of the standards and processes being applied by panels

› ensuring the consistent application of the Achievement Relative to Opportunity framework, including the consistent assessment of new and emerging researchers, part-time staff members, and staff members claiming Researcher Circumstances

› establishing mechanisms and processes by which material differences or apparent inconsistencies in standards and processes can be addressed by panels
› advising the TEC Board on any issues regarding consistency of standards across panels.

The moderation process

There are four stages in the moderation process.

Stage		Purpose	Timing
1	**Individual assessment moderation/monitoring**	Identify any patterns or variations in the preparatory and/or preliminary scores within panels that might indicate potential bias, error, or the inconsistent application of assessment criteria.	August – November 2026
2	**Initial Moderation Panel meeting**	Review the scoring data from the pre-panel meeting assessments to ensure the consistent application of assessment standards across panels.	November 2026
3	**Panel assessment moderation/monitoring**	Identify any patterns or variations in the Calibrated Panel component scores and Quality Categories within and across the panels that might indicate potential bias, error, or the inconsistent application of assessment criteria.	November – December 2026
4	**Second Moderation Panel meeting**	Review the Final Quality Categories assigned by panels to ensure consistency across panels.	December 2026

Pre-panel assessment moderation and monitoring

The goal of moderation during the pre-panel assessment stage in August-November 2026 is to identify any patterns or variations in the Preparatory and/or Preliminary scores within panels that might indicate potential bias, error, or the inconsistent application of assessment criteria.

The TEC Panel Advisors provide Co-Chairs and Co-Moderators with an analysis of the preparatory and preliminary scores generated by panel members, including cross-referral assessors. This information allows Co-Chairs to identify inconsistencies within their panels and Co-Moderators to identify inconsistencies across panels, for example, by looking at the correlation between lead, second, and cross-referral Preparatory scores and Preliminary component scores. Identifying any inconsistencies related to Achievement Relative to Opportunity provisions will also be important.

The report will also include information provided by cross-referral assessors. Co-Chairs can monitor cross-referral assessments and where issues or potential issues arise, these can be discussed between Co-Chairs and Co-Moderators before the initial assessment process concludes.

TEC Panel Advisors also monitor and review any concerns raised by panel members and provide updates to Co-Chairs and Co-Moderators identifying potential issues. While most concerns are likely to relate to the TEO audit of the

data, this provides Co-Chairs and Co-Moderators with an opportunity to intervene if necessary.

Initial Moderation Panel meeting

The initial Moderation Panel meeting will be held in November 2026 once the individual assessment process has been completed.

The purpose of this meeting will be to:
› confirm that the judgements of the panel have been based on the consistent application of principles and standards across all the panels, while at the same time not reducing the individual panel judgements to a mechanistic application of the assessment criteria
› address any outstanding issues that have emerged for members of the panels that might impact on the consistent application of standards during panel meetings
› agree on a consistent approach to issues that have the potential to compromise the integrity and consistency of the PBRF standards during panel meetings – for example, the consistent and appropriate treatment of new and emerging researchers, applied and practice-based research, or the approach to the assessment of unusual or uncommon types of research outputs.

As a result of the meeting, the Co-Chairs of each panel will, with help from their Panel Advisor, be in a position to:
› promote the principles of consistency
› ensure adherence to agreed procedures and standards
› identify and respond to areas of potential risk
› communicate to panel members the Moderation Panel's agreed approach to any identified issues.

For this to be achieved, the following information (at a minimum) will be the basis of discussion at the meeting:
› a review of the status of the EPs for each of the panels, including:
  – summary data of the numbers of EPs submitted by each TEO, EPs submitted to each panel, EPs submitted to each subject area, EPs transferred and cross-referred to other panels, and the number of new and emerging researchers
  – a summary of EPs assessed by each panel and by panel members, including assessment of NROs
› an analysis of the standard deviations, standard errors, and box and whisker diagrams outlining the spread of Indicative Quality Category (determined from the Preliminary scores) results by panel and subject area
› an issues report based on moderation undertaken during individual assessment
› a comparison of the Quality Categories assigned in previous Quality Evaluation exercises against the Indicative Quality Categories.

This information will be prepared by the TEC's Moderation Panel Advisor. However, all data reports will be available through the PBRF IT System throughout the assessment process.

Panel assessment moderation and monitoring

The goal of moderation during the panel meetings of the Quality Evaluation will be to identify any patterns or variations in the Calibrated panel scores and Quality

Categories across the panels that might indicate potential bias, error, or the inconsistent application of assessment criteria.

Co-Moderators will need to consider whether:

› there is evidence to suggest that the assessment process has not been applied according to the relevant guidelines

› the pattern of Quality Category profiles generated by each panel appears credible and justified.

Where there are possible material inconsistencies or an inadequate explanation of recommendations, the Co-Moderators will need to address these concerns with the Co-Chairs of the relevant panel in order for the Co-Chairs to review the Quality Categories assigned to their EPs, or provide further explanation of them.

Moderators will give a specific focus to this process to ensure that aspects such as the Achievement Relative to Opportunity framework have been taken account of and applied consistently. Ensuring EPs with fewer than three EREs have been fairly assessed based on quality will be a key area of focus.

Co-Moderators will be provided with information on a daily basis during the panel meetings to ensure they can determine there is consistency in the judgements and standards being applied across the panels, and that Co-Chairs are undertaking any actions required of them.

The information for Co-Moderators will include changes between Preliminary Quality Categories and Calibrated Panel Quality Categories by panel, changes at the detailed reassessment stage, and distribution of Quality Categories by panel and subject area across Quality Evaluations. The aim is to identify if any additional issues need to be addressed as early as possible.

Co-Chairs will also be provided with information on a daily basis; this information will be focused on supporting the workflow of the panel.

Second Moderation Panel meeting

This meeting will be held in December 2026 once the panel meetings have been completed.

The purpose of this meeting will be to:

› provide an independent review of the standards that have been applied by panels in the assignment of Quality Categories to EPs

› confirm that there has been consistent application of the detailed reassessment process, including Achievement Relative to Opportunity provisions

› review the Final Quality Categories assigned to ensure consistency across panels.

For this to be achieved, the following information (at a minimum) will be prepared by the Moderation Panel Advisor:

› An analysis of the Quality Categories agreed within each panel and across all panels, which will also show:

  – any outlier results in respect of subject areas, TEOs or panels

  – the extent to which panels have departed from, or confirmed, the quality profiles generated from the preliminary scores

  – a comparison of the 2026 aggregate Quality Categories profile and distribution against the 2003, 2006, 2012, and 2018 aggregate profile and distribution.

The Co-Chairs of each panel will also briefly present a summary of their panel meeting that may include comment on the practices of panel members, the panel process, and any issues that arose during the review process.

Reconvening of panels

A panel may need to be reconvened if there is a need to review its recommendations following the moderation process or the complaints process. Panels will be reconvened via videoconference only.

Reconvening panels will include:
› the Co-Chairs and any members of the panel required to review the recommendations (excluding those members with any conflicts of interest or those without the required expertise in the subject area)
› the Co-Moderators, Deputy Moderator Pacific, and the Co-Chairs of another panel
› the appropriate Panel Advisor and/or the Moderation Panel Advisor and/or other TEC staff as appropriate.

Prior to reconvening, the Co-Moderators will provide direction on the matters to be considered and how these should be addressed.

Following any reconvening, the Co-Chairs of the panel will be required to report in writing to the Co-Moderators:
› the reasons for the request for the review
› the outcomes of the panel's reconsideration, specifying any changes resulting from the review
› a commentary justifying the outcome (such as, any changes to, or confirmation of, their original recommendations).

This report will be required within five working days of the panel reconvening. This information will be provided to the TEC Board if there are any changes which result in a change to the funding allocations.

Moderation Panel reporting

The Moderation Panel report provides advice and assurance to the TEC Board on the consistent application of principles and standards within and across panels. This ensures a high level of confidence in the recommendations presented to the TEC Board by each of the panels.

Inputs to the Moderation Panel's report to the TEC Board include:
› panel reports
› any additional reports from the Co-Chairs of panels that were asked to review their recommendations
› relevant benchmarking information from the moderation process.

The Moderation Panel's report includes:
› the extent to which the Moderation Panel is satisfied that the assessment standards have been applied on a consistent basis
› a brief discussion of the recommendations from each panel, highlighting any issues that the Moderation Panel wishes to comment on and/or provide recommendations on
› information on the application of assessment standards, particularly during the assessment, and in relation to the application of Achievement Relative to Opportunity provisions

› any areas where refinement of the Quality Evaluation might be required

› a commentary on the overall Quality Evaluation process, highlighting issues that may impact on consistency across some or all panels

› a commentary from the Moderators addressing any matters of particular significance.

Glossary

The glossary contains the broad meanings of commonly used terms. Full descriptions of these can be found in the main body of the guidelines.

Term	Meaning
Achievement Relative to Opportunity framework	This framework provides equity-based accommodations for staff members who are New and Emerging, Part-Time, or who declare valid Researcher Circumstances.
Assessment period	The period between 1 January 2018 and 31 December 2025. Only research outputs produced and research activities and contributions undertaken in this period are eligible for inclusion in an Evidence Portfolio for Quality Evaluation 2026.
Co-authorship	Process by which a research output is produced by more than one researcher.
Component scores	The scores from zero to seven that are assigned to each of the two components of an Evidence Portfolio (Research Output and Research Contribution).
Co-production	Process by which a research output is produced by more than one researcher.
Contributions to the Research Environment (CRE)	A CRE item is evidence that describes the contribution or recognition or impact of a staff member's research and research-related activities. A CRE **type** is one of the six defined categories for listing these research-related activities in an Evidence Portfolio.
Contributions to the Research Environment component (CRE component)	The CRE **component** is one of the two components of an Evidence Portfolio and is weighted at 30 percent of the overall assessment score.
Evidence Portfolio (EP)	TEOs collect information on the research and research-related activity of their PBRF-eligible staff members during the assessment period. This information forms the EP that is submitted by the TEO to the TEC for assessment by a peer review panel.
Example of Research Excellence (ERE)	An ERE is a product of research that is evaluated during the Quality Evaluation process. It includes a contextual narrative, an ERE Output, and up to three optional Supplementary Items.
Examples of Research Excellence (ERE) component	An ERE is a product of research that is evaluated during the Quality Evaluation process. The ERE **component** is one of the two components of an Evidence Portfolio and is weighted at 70 percent of the overall assessment score.
ERE Output	The research output that is provided as part of an ERE.

Research excellence	For the purposes of the Quality Evaluation, research excellence will be assessed in terms of originality, rigour, reach, and significance, with reference to the quality standards appropriate to the subject area and to the unique nature of Aotearoa New Zealand's research cultures and needs.
External Research Income (ERI)	A measure of the income for research purposes gained by a TEO from external sources.
	ERI is one of the three measures of the PBRF, along with the Research Degree Completion measure and the Quality Evaluation.
Interdisciplinary research	Research that crosses two or more academic disciplines or subject areas.
Joint research	Research produced by two or more researchers.
Moderation Panel	Panel that meets to review the work of peer review panels to ensure that the TEC policy has been followed and the Quality Evaluation process has been consistent across the panels. The Moderators and the Panel Co-Chairs form the Moderation Panel.
New and emerging researcher	A PBRF-eligible staff member who is employed to undertake substantive and independent research for the first time during the assessment period and meets the criteria for new and emerging researcher status.
Non-quality-assured research output	A research output that has not completed a formal process of quality assurance.
Other Example of Research Excellence (OEREs)	Up to eight research outputs or activities that the PBRF-eligible staff member nominates in their Evidence Portfolio. OEREs form evidence of the staff member's platform of research.
Panel	See peer review panel and Moderation Panel.
PBRF-eligible staff member	A person who is employed by a TEO or otherwise contracted by a TEO on a contract for service in their own right as individuals, an entity or trading name, through their employer, or any other contracting the TEO may have developed, and meets the staff-eligibility criteria.
PBRF IT System	Online information technology system used by the TEC to administer and support the Quality Evaluation process.
Peer review panel	Group of experts who evaluate the quality of research as set out in individual Evidence Portfolios. There are 14 peer review panels, each covering different subject areas or combinations of subject areas.
Scoring sytem	The points range used to score each of the two assessed components of an Evidence Portfolio during the first stage in the assessment. The

	scoring system ranges from zero (lowest) to seven (highest).
Primary field of research	The research field of the staff member's research activity during the assessment period, and especially that of the EREs selected for their Evidence Portfolio.
Produced	'Produced' in the context of the PBRF means that the final version of the research output was made available in the public domain for the first time during the assessment period of 1 January 2018 to 31 December 2025.
Quality-assurance process	Formal, independent scrutiny by those with the necessary expertise and/or skills to assess quality.
Quality-assured research output	Research output that has been subject to a formal process of quality assurance.
Quality Category	A rating of research excellence assigned to the Evidence Portfolio of a PBRF-eligible staff member following the Quality Evaluation process.
	There are six Quality Categories: A, B, C, C(NE), R and R(NE). Quality Category A signifies researcher excellence at the highest level, and Quality Category R represents research activity or quality at a level that is insufficient for recognition by the PBRF. The A, B, C(NE) and R(NE) Quality Categories are all available for new and emerging researchers.
	The A, B, C and C(NE) Quality Categories are funded Quality Categories.
Quality Evaluation	The process that assesses the quality of research produced by PBRF-eligible staff members, the contribution they have made to the research environment, and the impact their research has had within a given assessment period.
	The Quality Evaluation is one of the three measures of the PBRF, along with the Research Degree Completion measure and the External Research Income measure.
Research	See the PBRF Definition of Research on page 13 of these Guidelines.
Research Degree Completion (RDC) measure	A measure of the number of research-based postgraduate degrees completed within a TEO where there is a research component of 0.75 equivalent full-time students or more and external moderation.
	One of the three measures of the PBRF, along with the External Research Income measure and the Quality Evaluation.
Researcher Circumstances	Researcher Circumstances provisions for Quality Evaluation 2026 aim to ensure staff members who have experienced circumstances that have seriously affected the quantity of research outputs

	and research-related activities during the assessment period are treated equitably.
Subject area	One of the 43 subject areas defined to represent the range of research disciplines assessed in the Quality Evaluation.
TEC	Tertiary Education Commission.
TEO	Tertiary education organisation.
Tie-points	The standards expected for the scores two, four and six in each of the two components of an Evidence Portfolio.
Total weighted score	The sum of the points allocated to each component of the Evidence Portfolio during the first stage of assessment, multiplied by the weighting for each component.