



Briefing Note: PBRF Review Progress Update and Timeframe Scenarios

To:	Hon Jenny Salesa, Associate Minister of Education		
Cc:	Hon Chris Hipkins, Minister of Education		
Date:	03 April 2020	Priority:	Low
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Purpose of paper

The purpose of this paper is for you to:

Note that the Performance-Based Research Fund (PBRF) Review will not progress at this stage of the COVID-19 lockdown

Agree that this briefing be proactively released, along with other PBRF Review papers, as part of the public consultation on proposed changes to the PBRF

Agree / Disagree



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Hon Jenny Salesa
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03/04/2020

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Background

1. In September 2018, Cabinet approved the Terms of Reference for a Review of the Performance-Based Research Fund (PBRF), and requested that you report back by April 2020 with recommendations for change.
2. On 31 January 2020, the independent panel reviewing the PBRF provided you with recommendations for changes to the PBRF. Following Ministerial decisions on proposed changes to the PBRF [METIS 1220021 refers], officials began developing a Cabinet paper and discussion document seeking approval for public consultation.

Progress update for the PBRF Review

3. The Cabinet paper and discussion document is currently part-way through development: agency consultation has been completed and a draft is ready for your consideration, ahead of Ministerial consultation.
4. As indicated in your Monday 30 March agency meeting, the PBRF Review (the Review) will not progress at this stage of the COVID-19 lockdown. Timing of next steps will be determined following the lockdown period. This will delay your report back to Cabinet.
5. Given the significance of the fund to the sector and the contributions of the sector to the Review, the Ministry of Education will update the tertiary sector on the status of the work (see Annex One).

Timeframe scenarios for the PBRF Review following COVID-19 lockdown

6. A delay in progressing the PBRF Review will mean the full process, including public consultation and final Cabinet decisions, will not be completed before 19 September 2020, the current election date.
7. Three likely timeframe scenarios for the Review following this stage of the COVID-19 lockdown are outlined below. Further advice can be provided on the likelihood of these scenarios following this stage of the COVID-19 lockdown.
8. Each scenario outlined is dependent on the duration of the lockdown and the resultant impacts on government and tertiary sector of the lockdown. Each scenario also allows for the proposed PBRF changes to be amended as necessary, i.e. in response to the impacts of COVID-19.

Scenario one: Cabinet approval is given and public consultation is completed pre-election

9. In this scenario, public consultation will need to commence no later than Wednesday 8 July 2020 and finish by Wednesday 19 August (one month before the election). This will allow final decisions on changes to the PBRF to be confirmed by Cabinet following the election and by the end of 2020. The implementation timeframes for these changes will be largely unaffected by this delay.

Scenario two: Public consultation is approved by Cabinet but does not commence until after the election

10. This scenario will occur if the Review progress is delayed and only allows enough time for pre-election approval by Cabinet for public consultation. Public consultation

will not, therefore, be carried out until after the election. This scenario will likely mean that final decisions on changes to the PBRF will be made in early 2021.

11. In effect, this scenario signifies a six month delay for the Review and implementation of any changes made to the PBRF. Many of the initial implementation plans for the proposed changes include the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) convening a Sector Reference Group (SRG) that will consult with the sector on how to operationalise these changes. A six month delay will reduce the timeframe for convening the SRG and the work that the SRG will undertake.

Scenario three: No further progress on the Review until after the election

12. In this scenario, no further progress can be made on the Review before the election due to the COVID-19 response. This scenario will require Cabinet approval for public consultation after the election. This will likely mean that final decisions on changes to the PBRF will not be confirmed until mid-2021.
13. This scenario signifies a one year delay for the Review and its implementation of any changes made to the PBRF. In addition to significantly delaying implementation, this may also necessitate a delay in the next Quality Evaluation from 2024 to 2026, as has been proposed as one of the changes to the PBRF for public consultation.

Annexes

Annex one: Update for the tertiary sector regarding status of the PBRF Review

COVID-19 Update on the PBRF Review:

Due to the nationwide focus on responding to COVID-19, the progress of the PBRF Review is currently delayed.

The Performance-Based Research Fund (PBRF) is regularly reviewed, and the last review was held in 2012/13. With this in mind, Government commissioned a review of the PBRF that commenced 29 July 2019 with the appointment of an independent panel.

The panel worked diligently through the issues raised in the Terms of Reference for the Review and engaged widely with the tertiary sector. The panel also conducted public consultation, receiving many written submissions and responses.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank the PBRF Review panel members for their expertise and leadership. We also thank each of the researchers, representatives and respondents that contributed to the Review.

Following the work of the review panel, potential changes to the PBRF are under active consideration. While the PBRF Review is currently delayed, this work will continue as soon as possible. Public consultation on any proposed changes to the PBRF will commence when there is opportunity to consult with the tertiary sector appropriately.