# Education Report: Key Decisions for the Performance-Based Research Fund Review Panel

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<th>To:</th>
<th>Hon Jenny Salesa, Associate Minister of Education</th>
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<td>Cc:</td>
<td>Hon Chris Hipkins, Minister of Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date:</td>
<td>28 February 2019</td>
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<td>Security Level:</td>
<td>In Confidence</td>
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<tr>
<td>Drafter:</td>
<td>Georgina English</td>
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<td>Key Contact:</td>
<td>Ewan Delany</td>
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<td>Messaging seen by Communications team:</td>
<td>No</td>
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## Purpose of Report

The purpose of this paper is for you to:

**Agree** to the proposed approach to the structure, makeup and role of the Performance-Based Research Fund (PBRF) Review panel or discuss at your next meeting with officials on Monday 4 March.

**Agree** that this Briefing will not be proactively released until after the format and composition of the PBRF Review panel has been finalised.
Recommended Actions

The Ministry of Education recommends you:

a. agree that the Ministry will look to appoint a PBRF Review panel that consists of five members, with support from a wider reference group of experts.
   Agree / Disagree

b. agree that the Ministry will look to cover the range of skills outlined in this report when recommending potential panel members to you for appointment.
   Agree / Disagree

c. agree that the PBRF Review panel will provide an independent report with any recommendations for change to the PBRF.
   Agree / Disagree

d. note that the Ministry would welcome a discussion on these recommendations with you on Monday 4 March.
   Noted

e. not release this report proactively until decisions have been made about the PBRF Review panel.
   Release / Not release

Andy Jackson  
Group Manager, Tertiary Policy
Graduate Achievement,
Vocations and Careers

Hon Jenny Salesa  
Associate Minister
of Education

28/02/2019  
4/13/19
Background

1 In February 2018, Cabinet agreed to review the PBRF and its core aims, while noting that the review will commence in mid-2019, following the completion of the 2018 Quality Evaluation [SWC-18-MIN-0004 refers].

2 The terms of reference for the Review of the PBRF were approved by Cabinet on 17 September 2018 [CAB-18-MIN-0449 refers]. They cover a range of aspects, such as supporting greater collaboration in research and maintaining a sustainable, diverse research workforce. The detailed terms of reference are attached as Annex 1.

3 You also noted to Cabinet that the Review will be undertaken by a small independent panel. This will allow the panel to look at the system as a whole and think about any changes they would recommend in an unbiased manner.

4 Key decisions about the role, structure and makeup of the panel are still to be made. This report outlines the Ministry’s recommended approach on each issue, for discussion on Monday 4 March.

Structure of the Panel

5 We recommend a smaller group, of five members, for the panel, with the support of a wider group of experts where necessary. This would allow for a more streamlined process, while also maintaining the ability of the panel to call on specific expertise where needed.

6 We would likely propose a list of possible experts for this wider reference group, in consultation with the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) and other agencies, which the panel could choose how and when to draw upon. They could also choose to consult with experts beyond those proposed by the Ministry and the TEC.

7 Alternatively, we could appoint a larger panel, covering a wider range of expertise. However, we would not recommend this option as it would make it more difficult for the panel to reach a consensus on their report (particularly in the short timeframe proposed) and would increase costs.

Makeup of the Panel

8 We recommend appointing a group of panel members that bring both an independent perspective and subject knowledge, while also being representative of a range of expertise. The skill areas that we would look to cover when recommending potential panel members include:

a. Overseas funding systems expertise.

b. Detailed knowledge of our current system – from a research perspective and a management perspective, likely to be a senior manager for a New Zealand university.

c. Mātauranga Māori expertise.

d. Pacific research expertise.

e. Expertise on knowledge transfer and impact / applied researchers or those from industry.

9 Where we are unable to cover all of these areas on the panel, we would look to do so with the wider reference group of experts. We would also expect the panel to work
closely with the PBRF Quality Evaluation panel chairs where relevant, such as the Māori Knowledge & Development and Pacific Research panels.

10 We are also looking to appoint panel members that are of a reasonably senior calibre, in order to give the panel, and therefore the Review, greater credibility with the sector. More senior panel members are also more likely to have a greater range of experience with the PBRF to call upon.

11 There is the potential for conflicts of interest on the panel: members may be eligible researchers under the PBRF, or affiliated with an organisation that receives PBRF funding. We propose to mitigate this by appointing people with a perspective from outside the New Zealand system, to provide balance on the panel.

Role of the Panel

12 We recommend that the panel be responsible for writing a single independent report with its recommendations. This would allow the panel to fully express any recommendations it has. The Ministry would then analyse this report and provide advice on any final recommendations for change to Cabinet.

13 We would look to provide the panel with independent support to help turn their findings into a report (ie contracting someone to do this for them). This would reduce the burden on the panel, and could make it more likely that potential members feel able to participate. This will be of particular importance to potential panel members given the fairly short timeline for the Review outlined below.

14 Alternatively, the panel could report directly to you. We do not see this as necessary as we expect that the panel’s report and our advice will be made public. In addition, we will need to be able to provide advice quickly on any implementation issues.

15 We would see the role of the panel, in formulating its report, to do the following:

   a. Review data and evidence provided by the Ministry and the TEC.
   b. Seek the views of key experts and stakeholders, both those on a wider reference group and beyond that.
   c. Draw on their international experience where relevant.
   d. Develop views on any areas for reform and make any corresponding recommendations.

16 The Ministry and the TEC would support the panel as they carry out their work. This could consist of providing:

   a. Relevant evidence for the panel to review.
   b. A list of potential experts for them to call on as a wider reference group.
   c. Secretariat services where necessary.
   d. Independent support to write the report on their behalf.

Timeline of Review

17 The Ministry is working towards a timeline that will allow you to report back to Cabinet by April 2020 with any recommendations for change to the PBRF you wish to publicly consult on.
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<th>Action</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>Ministry provides you with advice on the appointment of the panel</td>
<td>March 2019</td>
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<tr>
<td>Makeup of panel confirmed</td>
<td>April 2019</td>
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<tr>
<td>Review commences (including consultation)</td>
<td>June 2019</td>
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<tr>
<td>Review concludes and panel provides their report with recommendations to the Ministry (at which point you may wish to ask key stakeholders for comment, eg the Vice-Chancellors).</td>
<td>December 2019</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ministry provides you with advice on the panel's recommendations</td>
<td>February 2020</td>
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<tr>
<td>Report back to Social Wellbeing Committee and Cabinet with any recommendations for change to the PBRF for public consultation.</td>
<td>February – April 2020</td>
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18 The Review will commence in mid-2019, following the completion of the 2018 Quality Evaluation.

19 However, we would recommend appointing the panel earlier: sufficient time is needed to approach potential members of the panel to see if they are able to participate, as they confirm plans for their academic year.

20 The TEC have noted that depending on the scale of changes, there may be issues with implementing them in time for the 2024 Quality Evaluation. However we would not recommend compressing the timeframe any further, so that the panel has sufficient time to carry out a thorough review.

Financial Implications

21 s 9(2)(f)(iv)

Next Steps

22 We will be meeting with you on Monday 4 March. We would like to take this opportunity to discuss the recommendations in this report.

23 We will provide you with advice on recommended panel members by mid-March.

Proactive Release

24 We recommend that this Education Report is not released at this time. This is because final decisions are yet to be made on the format and composition of the panel. This is in line with the provisions of the Official Information Act 1982, which allows information to be withheld under s 9(2)(f)(iv) if it is still under active consideration.

25 s 9(2)(f)(iv)