AIDE MEMOIRE

2019 Review of the Performance Based Research Fund – Update on the Terms of Reference

Date: 24 August 2018
To: Hon Chris Hipkins
    Hon Jenny Salesa
From: Andy Jackson, Group Manager, Tertiary Education

Priority: High
METIS No: 1149128
Security Level: In Confidence
Contact: S 9(2)(a)

Purpose
1. A revised draft Cabinet paper for the Terms of Reference for the 2019 Review of the Performance Based Research Fund (PBRF) is attached. The paper incorporates feedback from your office provided on 23 August 2018 and also arising from our interagency consultation.

Comment
2. This draft Cabinet paper and indicative Terms of Reference will support your consultation with Minister Woods and other Ministers as required, on the details of the proposed PBRF Review.
3. We completed our consultation on the draft Cabinet paper with government agencies, who have not proposed any specific changes to the Terms of Reference. The Treasury and Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment both raised issues regarding the interconnection of PBRF with other research funds (for example, improving the transparency of PBRF research spending so government could leverage and connect research spending to support national goals, and interaction between the research goals of other research funds and PBRF). The interaction of PBRF with wider research funds/strategies will be considered in the Review as part of the re-examination of the PBRF objectives.

Next Steps

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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<tr>
<td>27 August</td>
<td>Revised draft Cabinet paper and Terms of Reference will be discussed with Minister Hipkins, your office and officials</td>
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<tr>
<td>28 August – 3 September</td>
<td>Ministerial consultation (including with Hon Megan Woods, Minister of Research, Science and Innovation).</td>
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<tr>
<td>4 September</td>
<td>Ministry officials update Cabinet paper and provide final paper to your office</td>
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<tr>
<td>6 September</td>
<td>Lodgement of Cabinet paper</td>
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<tr>
<td>12 September</td>
<td>Cabinet Social Wellbeing Committee (SWC)</td>
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<td>17 September</td>
<td>Cabinet consideration</td>
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Proactive release
4. We propose to release this aide memoire proactively along with the final Cabinet paper, following Cabinet's decisions on the Terms of Reference for the PBRF review.

Note: Hon Hipkins, 30/5/18
In Confidence

Office of the Minister of Education
Office of the Associate Minister of Education
Chair, Cabinet Social Wellbeing Committee

TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE 2019 REVIEW OF THE PERFORMANCE-BASED RESEARCH FUND

Proposal

1. This paper seeks agreement on the terms of reference for next year's review of the fund that supports tertiary education research activity (the Performance-based Research Fund [PBRF]).

Executive Summary

2. The PBRF provides $316 million annually to tertiary education organisations based on their past research excellence, annual research degree completions and their yearly ability to secure other research income (eg from other government sources, iwi, community, industry and internationally).

3. Since the PBRF began in 2002, a stronger research culture in the tertiary education sector has evolved, with the PBRF supporting a growth in the quantity and quality of research (and research-led teaching), by universities, institutes of technology, polytechnics, and some wānanga and private training establishments. This research is key to driving innovation and strong outcomes for learners, businesses, communities and New Zealand as a whole.

4. The PBRF does not require a fundamental redesign, but a refresh of the PBRF is warranted to ensure it continues to meet the changing environment of research and tertiary education. The PBRF has been successful in underpinning the growth of tertiary education research performance and productivity. However, it is important that this momentum continues and encompasses the research aspirations of all those working in the tertiary education sector.

5. The PBRF review will ensure that the gains in excellent research made to date continue and that the benefits of research are shared across New Zealand. The review will commence in mid-2019, after the results from the current six-yearly evaluation of individual researchers' portfolios are completed.

6. The review will focus on identifying ways to improve the effectiveness of the PBRF within the context of an increasingly collaborative research environment and a focus on maximising the impact of research in improving the wellbeing of New Zealanders. The review will also identify opportunities to simplify the administration and processes of PBRF while continuing to ensure a strong and sustainable foundation for
investigator-led research across the broader tertiary education sector (including new and emerging organisations).

7. Some of the concerns about the PBRF relate to the way tertiary education organisations have put into practice their engagement in the process. Some organisational practices aimed at improving research performance and participation may generate additional compliance costs or impact on workforce development. In other cases, a lack of infrastructure and support from the organisation limits the ability of researchers to effectively participate in PBRF. The broader implications that PBRF has on practices of organisations will be considered within the context of the review.

8. It is proposed that the 2019 review be undertaken by a small panel of people with expertise in research, end-users and tertiary education staff and/or postgraduate students, supplemented with relevant international research expertise. We will appoint of panel members in 2019, closer to the commencement of the Review.

Background

9. Tertiary education organisations have a key role in supporting investigator-led research activity within the wider science and research system, and building the skills of the future workforce of that system. The PBRF is the government’s primary mechanism for rewarding and supporting research by tertiary education organisations (universities, institutes of technology and polytechnics, wānanga and private training establishments).

10. The PBRF, established in 2002, rewards and encourages high quality research and research-led teaching across all subject areas and all types of research. The annual PBRF will allocate $316 million in 2018/19 to participating tertiary education organisations based on their past research activities, using three measures:

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<th>Measure</th>
<th>Share of PBRF</th>
<th>Basis of assessment</th>
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<tr>
<td>Quality evaluation</td>
<td>55% ($174 m)</td>
<td>Six-yearly peer review assessment of a selection of each individual’s research outputs (eg articles, creative work, conference presentations etc) and research contribution (eg student-related support, networking and collaboration, impact of research for a community or business etc). The Quality Evaluation is currently underway and received 8,281 research portfolios from participating staff at 36 tertiary organisations.</td>
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<td>Research degree completions</td>
<td>25% ($79 m)</td>
<td>Number of research-based post-graduate degrees (research masters and doctorates) that are completed in each organisation. Assessed annually.</td>
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<td>External research income</td>
<td>20% ($63 m)</td>
<td>Proxy measure of the quality of the research based on the ability to secure other research funding sources, eg Marsden Fund, industry research contracts, international research funding. Extra weighing is given to funding from non-government (New Zealand) sources. Assessed annually.</td>
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11. These three measures determine the amount allocated from the total PBRF funding pool annually to each organisation. On the basis of these measures, the larger, research-intensive tertiary education organisations receive the vast majority of PBRF funding, with the eight universities receiving 97 percent of the total PBRF pool.

Previous PBRF Reviews

12. The PBRF has been reviewed and evaluated three times in the 16 years since it was established – in 2004, 2008 and 2012/13. The 2012/13 review found that the PBRF had supported a significant increase in research performance and that fundamental changes to PBRF were not warranted. However, some refinements to the operational settings of PBRF were made to reduce compliance costs, better support new and emerging researchers, increase collaboration with end-users, improve reporting information and clarify the objectives [SOC Min(14) 2/3 refers].

13. The effectiveness of operational refinements made after 2012/13 PBRF review will be known later in 2019, after the completion of the current Quality Evaluation in April 2019 (when it will be possible to gauge the impact on research quality).

Supporting strong research in tertiary education to deliver outcomes

14. In February 2018 Cabinet agreed the education portfolio work programme, including agreement to review the PBRF and its core aims and inviting the Minister of Education and Associate Minister of Education (Hon Jenny Salesa) to report back to Cabinet with a terms of reference for the review (that would begin in mid-2019) [SWC-18-MIN-0004 refers].

15. Pending any changes to the PBRF, work is underway to support strong research activity across the sector through other mechanisms, including:

15.1. Centres of Research Excellence (CoREs), which support collaboration across tertiary institutions, industry and government research partners. There are currently ten CoREs delivering high quality research, and their funding will expire at end-2020. The next selection round to identify CoREs will begin in early 2019, with the funding effective beginning of 2021.

15.2. Wānanga Research Aspirations project, which will provide government support for wānanga to realise their research aspirations by investing in whakatupu mātauranga activity. A contingency fund of $10 million was established as part of Budget 2018 and new funding mechanisms are expected to be in place by mid-2019.

15.3. Entrepreneurial Universities, which support attracting world-leading entrepreneurial academics to drive commercially-relevant research and closer collaboration between business and university.

15.4. Development of a strategy (later in 2018) for the research, science and innovation (RSI) investments, that builds upon the National Statement of Science Investment. This strategy will have interconnections with the tertiary research, because research in many tertiary organisations is also supported funding from RSI and other government research funds.
Scope of the 2019 PBRF Review

16. The PBRF has been in place for 16 years and during that time the tertiary education sector, and wider research and innovation sector, have evolved in the way they conduct research. There is now much greater collaboration – between research bodies, between researchers and end-users (industry, community and government), and between New Zealand and international researchers. Government’s investment across the research system has also evolved to better support collaborative approaches and impactful research that can contribute to social, economic and environmental outcomes.

17. The PBRF has worked to effectively to date to support a significant increase in research performance and productivity in the sector, and the review of the PBRF in 2012/13 found that fundamental changes to the design of the Fund were not required. This view was reiterated by many individuals as part of the targeted engagement this year to inform this proposed Terms of Reference.

18. The larger, research-intensive institutions have made significant investment in staff and organisational practices to support their successful participation in PBRF. Consequently, the PBRF has embedded a strong research agenda across these institutions, which is reinforced by international research rankings for institutions (whose measures align with the fundamental activities rewarded by PBRF). These institutions are not seeking major changes to PBRF, but for the review to identify ways to improve PBRF operations, particularly in terms of reducing administrative costs.

19. The PBRF is not effectively supporting the research aspirations across the wider tertiary education sector, in particular, institutes of technology and polytechnics and wānanga, who have a lower focus on research activity compared to universities. These organisations, who are more orientated to teaching than research, do not have the scale of research that enables straightforward participation in PBRF. These newer entrants have difficulty in achieving scale and may need support to equalise access to the infrastructure that enables effective engagement in PBRF (for example, shared support services or capability funding).

20. Previous PBRF reviews noted that the distinctive approach of mātauranga Māori research may not be effectively supported, and that professional and applied research may be less easily assessed within the PBRF scheme. PBRF assessment processes and guidelines have been continually improved to ensure equitable assessment of all types of research. However, concerns continue to be voiced within the sector that PBRF discriminates against applied research in favour of fundamental research. There is limited evidence that such discrimination occurs and analysis of some quality scores from the last quality evaluation do not point to any explicit bias against applied research. The review will consider whether the PBRF design and implementation effectively supports all types of research (basic through to applied research).

21. A highly skilled, sustainable and diverse workforce is at the heart of the tertiary education system but there has some concern raised by parts of sector that the PBRF has created incentives for tertiary education organisations to value research over teaching. The PBRF is explicitly designed to support research and research-led
teaching and there is no evidence that the rising research quality within the tertiary education workforce comes at the expense of a decreased focus on teaching quality and student outcomes. In addition, the funding for tertiary teaching greatly exceeds that for research, creating a substantial motivation for organisations to provide excellent teaching and learning outcomes for students. The review will not consider ways to incentivise quality teaching, but will consider the impact that changes in PBRF design could have on the tertiary education research workforce.

22. The PBRF has been effective in stimulating and embedding a strong, quality research focus across the tertiary education sector over the last 15 years. While cognisant of this success, it is proposed that the 2019 review look at ways to improve the impact and effectiveness of PBRF within the context of an increasingly collaborative research environment and for research to have a greater impact on the outcomes of New Zealand and its people. A fundamental redesign of PBRF is not proposed, but refreshing the PBRF to meet the evolving environment of research and tertiary education is warranted.

Specific aspects to be considered in a refresh of PBRF

23. The following aspects will be considered in the PBRF Review's terms of reference:

23.1. Revisiting the current objectives of the PBRF given changes in the wider tertiary sector and science, research and innovation sector.

23.2. Supporting greater collaboration in research, both working across tertiary education organisations and with end-users of research.

23.3. Minimising transaction costs of PBRF for participating staff and tertiary organisations while also maintaining relevant assessment metrics to ensure the gains in quality research continue.

23.4. Maintaining a sustainable, diverse research workforce that supports applied researchers, new and emerging researchers, greater gender and ethnic diversity and supports the participation of older and senior researchers. The PBRF funding has a stewardship role in ensuring New Zealand has access to an excellent and highly-skilled, investigator-led, research workforce.

23.5. Ensuring PBRF adequately supports the full spectrum of research activity undertaken by the broader tertiary sector, including basic, creative, applied, mātauranga Māori research and new fields of research that employ indigenous perspectives.

23.6. Improving the measurement, assessment and rewards for research with a tangible impact on the outcomes for local communities, businesses or government sectors and wider society. Tertiary education institutions also have an explicit legislative role as critic and conscience of society\(^1\), which can involve engagement on their research knowledge with users and communities.

24. The detailed indicative Terms of Reference is attached as Appendix One.

\(^1\) s.162 (4)(a)(v) Education Act 1989
25. It is possible that analysis of the results of the 2018 Quality Evaluation may highlight some specific issues that should be explicitly noted in the terms of reference for consideration in the Review. Accordingly, we are proposing that minor changes to the terms of reference to clarify specific technical aspects or issues be made, if required, prior to the commencement of the formal review process in 2019.

The PBRF will be reviewed by a panel of independent experts

26. We propose that the review be undertaken by a small independent panel comprised of people who have experience/expertise in the research environment, including in the tertiary education sector, representative(s) of end-users of research, staff and/or students from tertiary education, and with Māori and Pacific members and a gender balance. It will also be supported, as required, by input from experts familiar with international higher education research performance systems (Australia, Canada and United Kingdom).

27. The review will not commence until mid-2019, and we propose making appointments to a Review Panel closer to the time. The Associate Minister of Education (Hon Jenny Salesa) will consult with relevant Ministers to identify suitable appointees.

28. The Review Panel will engage directly with management, staff and students across the tertiary education sector, as well as relevant community and industry end-users, to identify the issues and options for refreshing the design of the PBRF.

29. The Panel will consult on their options and provide recommendations for changes to government by the end-2019. Following consideration of the Review Panel's proposed changes, we will report back to Cabinet on final recommendations for changes to PBRF by April 2020.

Consultation

30. Ministry of Education officials have also undertaken targeted consultation with a range of key people across the sector, including groups that have benefited less from the PBRF funding. The consultation was to seek their perspectives on the issues to be covered in the Terms of Reference, including conversations with deans/heads of research at institutes of technology, polytechnics and universities, vice-chancellors, postgraduate students, Māori researchers, wānanga, women researchers, peak bodies (such as the Tertiary Education Union, Universities New Zealand, Royal Society), as well as people who have been involved in the design and previous reviews of the PBRF.

31. The Tertiary Education Commission have been involved in the development of the terms of reference for the PBRF review. The following departments have also been consulted and their views incorporated as appropriate: Ministry of Business, Innovation, and Employment (Science and Innovation), Ministry of Primary Industries, Ministry of Women's Affairs, Ministry of Pacific Peoples, Te Puni Kōkiri, Ministry of Social Development, Ministry of Health, the Treasury and the Prime Minister's Chief Science Advisor. The Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet have been informed.
Financial Implications
32. There are no financial implications and the costs of the review of PBRF will be met within baselines.

Legislative Implications
33. There are no legislative implications.

Human Rights
34. There are no human rights implications.

Gender Implications
35. The terms of reference proposes that the Review of PBRF examine the implications of the PBRF operational settings in rewarding and recognising excellence in research between genders, and identify options for mitigating any gendered differences perpetuated by the PBRF.

Disability Perspective
36. The terms of reference proposes that the Review of PBRF examine the implications of PBRF operational settings on the sustainability and diversity of the research workforce, which will include responding to any issues arising for disabled people in the research workforce.

Publicity
37. The Associate Minister of Education (Hon Jenny Salesa) will publicly announce the intended terms of reference for the review and its timing.

Proactive Release
38. The Associate Minister of Education proposes to release the paper proactively.

Recommendations
39. The Minister of Education and the Associate Minister for Education (Hon Jenny Salesa) recommend that the Committee:
   1. Note that the Performance-based Research Fund (PBRF) has been successful in supporting a continual improvement in research within the tertiary education sector over the last 15 years.
   2. Note the PBRF supports excellence in investigator-led research and the delivery of research-led teaching, and the PBRF review will ensure the funding remains effective in the context of an evolving research and innovation system and tertiary education system.
3. **Note** that building strong tertiary education research will also be supported by other government programmes, such as the Wānanga Research Aspirations project, Entrepreneurial Universities, Centres for Research Excellence, and research, science and innovation portfolio funds, as well as collaboration with industry and other end-users.

4. **Agree** that the focus for the review, to commence in mid-2019, will be to refresh the PBRF to ensure its objectives and operational settings align with the direction of changes in the way research is undertaken and funded, in particular, more intra- and inter-disciplinary collaboration, greater connections with end-users and research that has an impact on social, economic and environment outcomes.

5. **Agree** that the review also consider ways that PBRF settings can be simplified to reduce compliance costs, the fund’s role in the stewardship of research capability for a robust investigator-led, sustainable research workforce, and the ways PBRF can effectively support all types of research endeavour.

6. **Authorise** the Minister of Education (Hon Chris Hipkins) and the Associate Minister of Education (Hon Jenny Salesa) to modify the attached Terms of Reference to incorporate any specific issues that may come to light following the completion of six-yearly quality assessment of individual research activity (due April 2019).

7. **Agree** that the review of PBRF be undertaken by an independent panel, to be appointed in 2019 by the Minister of Education and the Associate Minister of Education (Hon Jenny Salesa), in consultation with relevant Ministers.

8. **Note** the Panel would be expected to present their recommendations by end-2019, and proposals for any changes to PBRF will be considered by Cabinet by April 2020.

**Authorised for lodgement**

Hon Chris Hipkins  
Minister of Education

Hon Jenny Salesa  
Associate Minister for Education
APPENDIX 1

Indicative Terms of Reference
Review of the Performance-based Research Fund (PBRF) 2019

The purpose of the Performance-Based Research Fund (PBRF) is to ensure that excellent research in the tertiary education sector is encouraged and rewarded.

The aim of the 2019 review is to examine ways that the government can continue to support research excellence by improving the effectiveness and efficiency of the PBRF settings and to ensure the benefits of this research are shared across New Zealand. Any changes to PBRF would be taken into account the nature of the existing research culture within the tertiary education setting, and the government’s priorities for New Zealand’s research and innovation system and tertiary education system.

Context

The PBRF was established in 2002 and supports excellence in investigator-led research within the tertiary education sector, and in turn, supports quality research-led teaching. The PBRF has supported the development of a stronger research culture across tertiary education organisations over the last 15 years. Given the growing maturity of the research functions across many parts of the tertiary education sector it is timely to revisit the way research excellence continues to be evaluated and measured via the PBRF.

The PBRF will allocate $316 million in government funding to tertiary education organisations in 2018/19, based on the level and quality of their research activities. The PBRF is accessed primarily by universities, although institutes of technology and polytechnics (ITPs), wānanga and private training establishments (PTEs) also participate.

Allocation of research funding across organisations is determined from a mix of measures that evaluate the quality of research, including a six-yearly peer assessment process that evaluates each researcher’s past performance, the number of postgraduate degrees completed and the level of external research income organisations earn.

Previous Reviews of PBRF

The PBRF has been reviewed three times in the last 15 years (2004, 2008 and 2012/13). The last review found the PBRF had supported a significant increase in the research performance and productivity of tertiary education organisations. Fundamental changes to PBRF were not warranted, but some refinements were made to reduce compliance costs, better support new and emerging researchers, increase collaboration with end-users, improve reporting information and clarify the overarching objectives. The overall impact of these changes of PBRF on the quality of researchers will be known by mid-2019, when this review will begin.
Revisiting the objectives of the PBRF

The objectives of the PBRF were originally agreed in 2002 and the primary purpose of the PBRF has remained unchanged – namely, rewarding and encouraging high-quality tertiary education research and research-led teaching and learning (at degree level and above).

The PBRF objectives were modified in 2014 after the last PBRF review in 2012/13, to reflect the role of PBRF in supporting government’s wider priorities in science, research and innovation.

The primary objectives of the PBRF are to:

- increase the quality of basic and applied research at New Zealand’s degree-granting tertiary education organisations (TEOs)
- support world-leading teaching and learning at degree and postgraduate levels
- assist New Zealand’s TEOs to maintain and lift their competitive rankings relative to their international peers
- provide robust public information to stakeholders about research performance within and across TEOs.

In doing so, the PBRF will also:

- support the development of postgraduate student researchers and new and emerging researchers
- support research activities that provide economic, social, cultural, and environmental benefits to New Zealand, including the advancement of Mātauranga Māori
- support technology and knowledge transfer to New Zealand businesses, iwi and communities.

The 2019 Review provides an opportunity for revisiting these current objectives and the primary purpose of PBRF. It also provides an opportunity to ensure that the PBRF objectives align with any changes in direction or priorities within the wider science and research system or the tertiary education system. For example, the update of the Tertiary Education Strategy or the development of principles to underpin New Zealand’s research practice with a National Research Charter for Aotearoa New Zealand.

The Review will consider whether the current objectives need to be further modified to ensure the PBRF meets current and future challenges and priorities in the research system and in the research-led teaching environment.
Improving research collaboration and engagement with end-users

The individual researcher has been the ‘unit of assessment’ for measuring the quality of research excellence within the PBRF since it began. This year 8,281 researchers have submitted an evidence portfolio for peer review assessment, as part of the 2018 Quality Evaluation process.

While the amount of information that has to be submitted within a portfolio had been reduced for 2018 to lessen compliance costs, the process of individual evaluation can still be burdensome, imposing costs on the individual researcher, their organisation and the government.

Collaboration is a fundamental component of high-quality science, research and innovation, and collaboration is explicitly supported and encouraged by other government funding of research activity (for example, the National Science Challenges and the Centres for Research Excellence [CoRES]).

Many in the sector see the individual researcher as the best way of establishing the quality of research across organisations. However, focusing on a group unit of assessment may be a way of encouraging effective collaboration amongst researchers and with end-users. A group approach to research assessment could also support greater mentoring of new and emerging researchers and ensure that New Zealand sustains and grows its research workforce (particularly given the highly skilled but aging research workforce).

Collaboration, particularly with end-users of research, could also be enhanced the ability of organisations or ‘groups’ to provide improved information on the pathway to impact of their research activity. The group or organisational lens could be a more appropriate unit for PBRF to assess impact, rather than an individual researcher. The individual researcher has limited capacity to directly link his/her research work to impacts on economic, social and environmental outcomes, whereas a group or organisation can be more easily measured in how they have supported their researchers’ efforts in collaboration, outreach activities, dissemination and engagement (which ultimately create an impact for the research).

Group-based assessment could also prove to be more complicated for tertiary education organisations and government in terms of determining the membership, measurement and definitions for a group (for example, grouped by department, around research themes, by disciplines or interdisciplinary groups).

The Review will examine the merits of moving from individual-based assessment to a group-based assessment, in terms of boosting collaboration, supporting workforce development and sustainability, reducing compliance costs and measuring impact of research.

If individual is to be retained as the unit of assessment, the Review will identify options within the PBRF settings to improve collaboration and impact assessment via other PBRF settings.
Boosting the impact of tertiary education research

Across the world, governments are working to ensure public investment in research demonstrates an 'impact' in terms of improvements in societal wellbeing, economic development and environmental outcomes. New Zealand's National Statement of Science Investment 2015-2025 has impact as one of two pillars of the science system.

Tertiary education organisations also have an explicit legislative role as critic and conscience of society (s.162 (4)(a)(v) Education Act 1989), which also underpins the organisations and research staff engaging in impactful conversations with New Zealand communities, based on their research knowledge and expertise.

It is important that the benefits of research undertaken in the tertiary sector are shared across New Zealand society. There are concerns that the current Research Contribution measure in the Quality Evaluation may not adequately capture the value of applied research, patents, mātauranga Māori research and other research which benefits local community, industry or environment.

Measuring impact from research activity is not without complexity, but many other government research investments already target impact specifically. Any change to PBRF to better assess impact will need to strike a balance in terms of compliance costs and rewarding impactful research activity. The review will draw on the changes to assessing impact internationally through metrics, case studies and impact statements, including in the United Kingdom, Canada and Australia.

The Review will examine options for improving the assessment and rewards for research that has a tangible impact for communities, the environment, businesses or government sectors. The Review will provide advice on the costs and benefits of introducing further measures to assess impact into the PBRF.

Assessing excellent research with lower transaction costs

Currently the excellence in research undertaken by tertiary education organisations determined by three components – primarily the quality evaluation assessment process every six years, the yearly postgraduate research degree completions and the amount of external research income generated annually.

The PBRF quality evaluation assessment process is thorough and robust in measuring each researcher's performance in terms of research outputs (journal articles, conference presentations, creative work exhibition or performance, etc) and research contribution (eg supervision of research student and factors that reflect a researcher's contribution to student-related activity, impact of research for a community or business, networking and collaboration, peer or industry recognition or prizes, etc)
The review provides an opportunity to consider how the PBRF settings could be adjusted to measure excellent research at a lower transaction cost (either for staff, management or government). This will include consideration of:

- Reducing the frequency of the quality evaluation by moving from six-yearly cycle to eight or ten-yearly assessment cycle, and whether variable assessment cycles should be introduced depending on the seniority of researchers.

- Introducing simpler metrics to assess research quality. For example, using new information research reporting data such as the National Research Information System (an information hub about New Zealand’s research activities), which has the potential to reduce compliance costs via streamlined research reporting. Other options that could be considered are use of new data systems that monitor dissemination activities, use of H-indices or bibliometrics to provide more frequent excellence measures for particular research disciplines.

- Introducing self-assessment processes for some research areas or some tertiary education organisations that have a strong research culture embedded.

The Review will identify options for modifying current PBRF settings to reduce transaction costs for research staff, tertiary organisations and government, including changes to the unit of assessment, changes in the time period(s) for quality evaluation, use of new metrics to assess research quality, use of self-assessment and the funding proportions allocated across the current three measures (quality evaluation, research degree completions and external research income).

Recognising and rewarding all types of research activity

There is ongoing concern that the PBRF is not adequately recognising and rewarding the full spectrum of research activity undertaken with tertiary education organisations, from basic through to professional and applied research, mātauranga Māori research and new fields of research drawing on indigenous perspectives.

PBRF assessment processes (including the appointment and training of panel members for the six-yearly quality evaluation) and guidelines have been continually improved to ensure equitable assessment of all types of research. However, concerns continue to be voiced within the sector that PBRF discriminates against applied research in favour of fundamental research. There is limited evidence that such discrimination occurs and analysis of some quality scores from the last quality evaluation do not point to any explicit bias.

The nature of the PBRF settings may not adequately recognise the excellence of some specific types of research undertaken across the tertiary education sector. Alternatively, PBRF settings may recognise excellent research across a wide range of activity, but this excellence is not rewarded because the tertiary organisations undertaking the research do not have the capability or capacity to effectively engage in the PBRF process (for example,
where insufficient organisational resources or knowledge are available to support the submission of high-quality evidence portfolios).

Wānanga have previously raised concerns about funding for mātauranga Māori research by PBRF, which resulted in the establishment of a separate Wānanga Research Aspirations project. This project will consider a bespoke approach to support for mātauranga Māori research. However, for wānanga who continue to participate in PBRF, the review will consider what further support could be provided to them and for Māori research undertaken in other tertiary organisations.

The Review will consider how the PBRF can better support the research activity of all types of research, including basic, applied, creative, mātauranga Māori research and indigenous research frameworks. This will include consideration of whether any specific support is required to enable some organisations to effectively participate in the PBRF, or whether a separate funding mechanism may be required to support particular types of research activity or help organisations build their research capacity and capability.

Sustainable and diverse workforce with investigator-led research capability

The tertiary education sector plays a key role in developing New Zealand’s research workforce, and this is reflected in the specific funding within the PBRF for annual research degree completions. The way people engage in work will continue to evolve and the PBRF will need to ensure that it does not disadvantage any researchers (for example, the changing nature of work may increase numbers of staff working part-time, flexible working arrangements, working across multiple workplaces or contracting arrangements).

There are concerns that the nature of the PBRF quality evaluation process may disadvantage those working less than fulltime due to family and parental responsibilities, who cannot provide as wide a research contribution or research outputs. The review will consider whether further consideration needs to be given to provide better recognition for staff working less than fulltime (for example, the instances in which tertiary education organisations are determining and verifying parttime employment due to childcare as an extraordinary circumstance).

There has been concern that tertiary organisations’ response to the PBRF settings have led to a less diverse and sustainable workforce. Changes were made following the 2012/13 review to better support the sustainability of the workforce with the introduction of a financial weighting for evidence portfolios submitted by new and emerging researchers. There is also extra weighing provided by PBRF for research degree completions by Māori and Pacific students or for a thesis submitted in te reo Māori.
Senior researchers have a key role in supporting the development of new and emerging researchers, and concerns have been raised that the nature of PBRF rankings can have a deleterious impact on organisations' approaches to mentoring and developing the next generation of researchers. For example, moving to a group as unit of assessment for quality evaluation may enable greater mentoring and collaboration within a discipline or department.

The Review will examine the effectiveness of the PBRF on the development of highly-skilled and diverse research workforce for New Zealand in the context of the changing nature of work and workplaces. This will include consideration of whether any adjustments to PBRF settings are required to support a sustainable mix of gender, ethnicity and ages across the tertiary research workforce.

The Review will also consider whether the PBRF creates any incentives or disincentives within tertiary education organisations given the changing nature of work and the continued evolution of new types of working arrangements, ways of working and workforce development.