

**Tertiary Education
Commission**
Te Amorangi Mātauranga Matua



PBRF Sector Reference Group

**Consultation #1 summary of
feedback – Approach to the
operational design of the Quality
Evaluation 2025**

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Purpose

1. This paper provides a summary of feedback on the first consultation paper produced by the PBRF Sector Reference Group (SRG): Approach to the operational design of the Quality Evaluation 2025.
2. The paper also communicates the SRG's decisions on the grouping and sequencing of issues to be considered over the duration of the SRG process, as well as indicative timing of the public consultations on issues.

Background

3. Consultation paper #1 set out the proposed issues to be considered by the SRG in advising the TEC on operational design changes to the Quality Evaluation. The issues were grouped and sequenced into a series of proposed consultation papers, along with an indicative timeline.
4. The paper provided background information on the PBRF Quality Evaluation, the PBRF Review Panel, and Cabinet's subsequent decisions on changes to the Quality Evaluation 2025. It also set out the SRGs working methods and approach.
5. The public consultation process ran from 8 October – 5 November 2021. Responses to the proposal were collected via Survey Monkey. Respondents were asked to give feedback on the proposed list of issues, their grouping into consultation papers, and the sequencing and timing of the consultation papers. Respondents were also invited to provide general comment on the proposed SRG process.

Respondent analysis

6. A total of 23 submissions were received over the consultation period. Of the 23 submissions, 12 were made on behalf of organisations, as follows:
 - a. Auckland Institute of Studies
 - b. The Elshire Group (not currently a PBRF funding recipient)
 - c. Lincoln University
 - d. Massey University
 - e. Te Pūkenga
 - f. Tertiary Education Union
 - g. University of Auckland
 - h. University of Otago
 - i. Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato University of Waikato
 - j. Victoria University of Wellington Te Herenga Waka
 - k. Whitecliffe College
 - l. Wintec
7. A further submission was made on behalf of the Department of Pharmacology and Toxicology, University of Otago, and another was made on behalf of the Early Career Researcher Committee

of the Maurice Wilkins Centre, a Centre of Research Excellence hosted by the University of Auckland. We have considered these as institutional submissions for the purposes of the analysis below.

8. Nine individual submissions were made, of which eight were made by individuals who are employed at TEOs. Of these, five disclosed their career stage as late-career, two as mid-career, and one as early career.

Response summary and comment

9. The organisational responses received were generally supportive of the proposed consultation topics. Based on the spread of responses, we are therefore comfortable that the high-level consultation topics identified are supported by the sector, and that no significant issues have been omitted.
10. The majority of the individual responses commented on broad matters not related to the issues in the consultation paper, or on decisions which Cabinet has already made. We received a small number of individual comments which are relevant and these are noted in the table below.

Proposed additional issues for SRG consideration

11. Of the 14 organisational submissions, only the Tertiary Education Union (TEU) expressed disagreement with the proposed consultation topics as a whole. As the TEU submission noted, this flows from their position that they do not support the PBRF. Otherwise, there appears to be broad sector agreement with the issues we have identified, as we received no specific feedback that any of the issues identified should not be considered.
12. A number of specific additional issues were proposed, as set out in the table below. The SRG is happy to confirm that the majority of these issues fall within the broad consultation topics communicated to the sector in Consultation Paper #1, but there are a small number of additional issues that the SRG will not consider. These issues were either out of scope or, based on the PBRF review and the TEC’s analysis of the Quality Evaluation 2018, they do not warrant further attention.

Table 1: SRG decisions on proposed additional issues

Origin of feedback	Issue	SRG decision
Proposed additional issues the SRG will consider		
Massey University	More clarity on the meaning of ‘impact’ as currently expressed in consultation document and discussion of impact in relation to the QE.	This issue has been considered in the discussion and development of the consultation paper on Research Definitions
Massey University and Victoria University of Wellington	Review and revisit purpose and content of the Staff Data File given discontinuation of AQS metric, and to ensure it does not duplicate EP data.	We are happy to confirm that this issue will be considered in the Technical Matters Issue Paper. It will also be considered as appropriate in the EP Design and Individual Circumstances papers.

Massey University, Lincoln University and an individual response	Produce final summative consultation paper at the end of the SRG process summarising all changes.	We are happy to confirm that the Draft Guidelines paper will include a Summary of In Principle Decisions.
Victoria University of Wellington	Clarify those aspect of the Quality Evaluation design which are not being considered by the SRG and therefore will not change	The TEC is not proposing to make any significant design changes without SRG consultation. All the issues the SRG intends to consider were included in the first consultation paper. If it becomes necessary to address any new issues, the TEC will inform stakeholders in advance.
Victoria University of Wellington	Consider whether the EP weightings for ERE/OERE and RCs will remain at 70%/30%	We are happy to confirm that this issue will be considered in the EP Design paper.
Te Pūkenga, University of Otago, and an individual response	Panels papers need to address panel training needs in light of changes to PBRF research definitions and EP design, to ensure interdisciplinary research is adequately understood and valued, and to ensure robust, Te Tiriti-compliant processes for Māori panel appointments.	We are happy to confirm that these issues will be considered in the two Panels papers.
Maurice Wilkins Centre Early Career Steering Committee	Consider ways to make putting together EPs less time-consuming for individual researchers	We are happy to confirm that this issue will be considered in the EP Design paper.
Victoria University of Wellington	The Reporting paper should include the new funding calculation to address the Māori and Pacific researchers weightings	The TEC notes that the funding calculation is found in the Funding Determination. The SRG will consider how ethnicity data could be reported as part of the Reporting paper.
Individual response	The Quality Evaluation does not adequately recognise the Initial Teaching Education sector	In considering the Research Definitions issue, the SRG was keenly aware of the need to develop definitions inclusive of a broad range of research types, but we note that this is specifically an issue for Panel Chairs to consider when they develop panel-specific elaborations of the definition of research.
Proposed additional issues which the SRG will not consider		
University of Auckland and University of Otago	Consideration of standards and principles for defining output eligibility rules, particularly in relation to the status of working	Output eligibility rules were not identified as requiring revision during the PBRF Review process or through subsequent sector consultation. The Audit Report for Quality Evaluation

	papers or versions of outputs previously submitted.	<p>2018 reports that the existing process and its outcomes were robust.</p> <p>The SRG will not consider this issue but the TEC will engage with the sector to ensure eligibility rules are clearly communicated in the Guidelines.</p>
University of Auckland	Consideration of the definition of the FTE calculation to be applied to eligible staff, to ensure consistency across a range of employment conditions is achieved.	<p>FTE definitions were not identified as requiring revision during the PBRF Review process or through subsequent sector consultation. The Audit Report for Quality Evaluation 2018 reports that the existing process and its outcomes were robust.</p> <p>The SRG will not consider this issue but the TEC will engage with the sector to ensure FTE calculation rules are clearly communicated in the Guidelines.</p>
University of Otago, Lincoln University and University of Waikato	Request that TEOs receive numerical EP scores alongside Quality Categories	<p>This issue was not identified by organisations during the PBRF Review process or subsequent sector engagement, and would represent a very significant change to PBRF.</p> <p>The SRG will not consider this issue.</p>
Individual response	TEOs should not receive individual EP scores	<p>This issue was not identified by organisations during the PBRF Review process or subsequent sector engagement, and would represent a very significant change to PBRF.</p> <p>The SRG will not consider this issue.</p>
Proposed additional issues that are out of scope for the SRG		
University of Auckland	Inclusion of the Audit Methodology within the overall guidelines, to ensure sector-wide input is captured, and TEOs have early visibility of the audit protocols and procedures.	<p>The Audit Methodology is out of scope for the SRG.</p> <p>The TEC is happy to consider how to include the methodology within the final Guidelines.</p>
Victoria University of Wellington	Revisit the original intent of the New and Emerging Researcher category to ensure it remains fit for purpose, and assemble an SRG subgroup to collect relevant data on Individual Circumstances issues.	<p>Cabinet has already made decisions in relation to the New and Emerging Researchers category, and as such this is out of scope.</p> <p>We are happy to confirm that a subgroup is being assembled for the Individual Circumstances set of issues.</p>

The Elshire Group	The Quality Evaluation should assess institutional research environments	Research environment is assessed indirectly via the existing three PBRF components. Cabinet has already made decisions on the fundamental structure of the PBRF and as such this is out of scope.
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Proposed ordering of issues for SRG consideration

13. There was less sector agreement about the proposed order and grouping of issues to be considered into the nine consultation papers (including the Draft Guidelines). Of the 14 organisational responses received, seven were supportive of the proposed ordering of consultation topics and seven disagreed. We received a number of suggestions on the proposed grouping and ordering of issues, including from organisations that supported the ordering of consultation topics.

SRG Decisions on high-level ordering and timing of consultation topics

14. All six university submissions, along with Te Pūkenga’s submission, requested the consultation period be extended. Recognising the unified sector voice on this issue, the SRG has decided to extend the consultation period until 14 February 2022. There are some workflow sequencing issues which flow from this decision, and as a consequence the TEC intends to publish In Principle decisions on research definitions and EP design together in mid-2022. The TEC and the SRG remain committed to publishing the final Guidelines in June 2023.
15. The University of Auckland proposed that the Panel Assessment Criteria and Panel Membership and Working Methods papers be brought forward ahead of the EP Design and Individual Researcher Circumstances papers, and also proposed that a standalone Staff Identification Criteria paper be considered following the Research Definitions paper. This view does not appear to be shared by the rest of the sector, and given the importance of considering Research Definitions and EP Design sequentially, and of providing sector clarity on Individual Circumstances settings as soon as possible, the SRG has confirmed the consultation topic order set out in Consultation Paper #1. The confirmed timeline is set out at the end of this paper.
16. The University of Victoria proposed that technical matters be considered across each consultation topic, with the Technical Matters paper used as a wash-up for any additional matters arising. The SRG considers it preferable to make decisions on technical matters together to ensure interdependencies are considered in the round and to facilitate any external advice. However, the SRG agrees with the intent of the proposal and has accordingly decided to include ‘technical considerations’ as a standing item for all options put forward through the Issues Papers. Decisions on technical matters will remain reserved for the Technical Matters paper.
17. The University of Victoria also proposed that specialist sub-groups be stood up to consider specific issues including Individual Researcher Circumstances and research output request and supply processes. The SRG is happy to confirm that sub-groups are operating for each consultation topic, and external expertise is being provided as required.

Covid-19 impacts

18. A number of submissions commented on the proposal for considering how to address Covid-19 impacts. The TEU proposed bringing this issue forward ahead of the Individual Researcher Circumstances paper, and Whitecliffe College also indicated concerns that Covid-19 impacts were being considered too late in the process. Wintec proposed pushing the issue back until the end of the SRG process, so that that it could be considered against the In Principle decisions made to date.

19. The SRG considers that Covid-19 impacts on researcher activity should be considered as part of Individual Research Circumstances and as such has decided not to consider it sooner as a standalone issue. The SRG is also happy to clarify that a Covid-19 impact assessment will be carried out against all In Principle decisions made at the end of the SRG process. Any changes as a consequence of that review will be included in the final Summary of In Principle Decisions and Draft Guidelines published in April 2023.

20. The TEU also proposed postponing the Quality Evaluation until 2026. The SRG notes that Cabinet has made decisions around the overall timing of the Quality Evaluation 2025, and has already postponed the exercise in response to sector concerns about the impact of Covid-19. As such this is out of scope for the SRG.

SRG decisions on grouping and sequencing of specific issues

21. A number of submissions proposed re-ordering and re-grouping specific issues, and these are summarised in the table below, along with the SRG’s decision.

Table 2: SRG decisions on ordering and grouping of specific issues

Origin of feedback	Timing request	SRG decision
Massey University, Otago University, Waikato University	Technical changes to EP schema: Massey proposed this issue should be considered sooner than the Technical Matters paper. Otago and Waikato sought clarity that EP schema is included in the Technical Matters.	The SRG does not consider it possible to finalise the EP schema until it has considered issues that inform EP Design and the Panels Assessment processes, as well as other matters included in Reporting. In addition, the finalisation of the schema is closely linked to the IT System build. Accordingly, the SRG has decided that the EP schema will remain in the Technical Matters paper.
Victoria University of Wellington	Victoria proposed that staff identification criteria (part of the Individual Researcher Circumstances paper) be considered alongside the unique staff identifiers (USI) issue (Technical Matters)	The SRG does not consider that USI needs to be considered alongside staff identification criteria and does not consider that USI belongs in the Individual Circumstances Paper. Accordingly the SRG has decided that USI will remain within the Technical Matters paper.

	paper), and noted that both have Privacy Act implications.	The SRG is happy to confirm that Privacy Act implications will be considered in relation to all issues relating to individual staff members, and external expertise will be sought as appropriate.
Victoria University of Wellington	Examples of Research Excellence (ERE) request and supply processes should be included in the EP Design paper rather than the Technical Matters paper.	The SRG has decided that that the request and supply process issue should remain with the EP schema under the Technical Matters paper given the interdependencies.
Victoria University of Wellington	Consideration of tikanga is not only a matter for the Panel Membership and Working Methods paper but should be considered across all consultation topics	This issue is specifically pertinent to the Panel paper based on feedback from the previous Quality Evaluation and given the Guidelines' function in setting out the panel operating procedures. However, the SRG is happy to confirm it is carefully considering matters relating to Te Ao Māori, including tikanga, as it carries out all of its work.
Lincoln University; University of Waikato	Both noted concerns that the Consultation paper implied the time between the Staff Census Date and the EP submission date would be reduced in 2025.	There is no intent to reduce the time between these two dates. The SRG will consult with the sector in 2022 on any proposed changes to timeframes.

Agreed order of SRG consultation topics and indicative timing

22. Following consideration of the feedback on Consultation Paper #1, the SRG has confirmed it will consider the following consultation topics as follows:

Consultation topic	Indicative consultation period	Clarifications/ to note
Research and research excellence definitions	10 December 2021 – 14 February 2022	SRG recommendations on research definitions will be reviewed alongside EP design recommendations and In Principle decisions published jointly in mid-2022
EP Design	4 March – 1 April 2022	As above
Individual Researcher Circumstances	Early May – Early June 2022	
Panels Assessment Criteria	July 2022	

Panels Membership and Working Methods	September 2022	
Technical Matters	November 2022	'Technical considerations' standing item will be included in all papers
Reporting	January – end of February 2023	
Draft Guidelines and Summary of In Principle Decisions including review of Covid-19 impacts	April 2023	In Principle decisions in relation to Covid-19 individual circumstances will be reviewed as part of the Covid-19 impact assessment of the whole Guidelines.