

**Tertiary Education
Commission**

Te Amorangi Mātauranga Matua



**Consultation 6
TEC decisions and summary of
feedback: Panels membership
criteria and working methods**

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Purpose

1. This paper communicates the decisions of the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) in relation to the issues set out in the sixth consultation paper produced by the PBRF Sector Reference Group (SRG), *Panels membership criteria and working methods*:
 - › Panel chairing arrangements
 - › Panels composition
 - › Medicine and Public Health panel
 - › Panel size
 - › Māori Knowledge and Development panel name.
2. The paper also provides a summary of feedback on the options set out in in the consultation paper in relation to these issues.

Background

3. Following Cabinet’s decisions in 2021, the SRG has been convened by the TEC to advise on operational design changes to the PBRF Quality Evaluation 2026. The SRG delivers this function through a process of agreeing information and options for identified grouped issues, gathering sector feedback on those options through a series of consultations, considering consultation responses, and making recommendations to the TEC.
4. Depending on the nature of the issues, the TEC makes either decisions or in-principle decisions based on the SRG’s recommendations. In-principle decisions are made on the understanding that the consultation process is ongoing, and that other decisions or external factors may require the recommendations to be reconsidered as part of the process of developing the new Guidelines for Quality Evaluation 2026.
5. The decisions communicated in this paper will be implemented immediately and are not dependent on other decisions or external factors.

Next steps

6. These decisions will be reflected in the peer review panels Call for Nominations. The first stage of the nominations process will be announced on the TEC website.
7. The decisions reported in this paper will inform the subsequent issues to be considered by the SRG going forward and will also be reflected in the Guidelines for Quality Evaluation 2026.

Sector consultation process

8. The SRG consultation paper 6 – *Panels membership criteria and working methods* provided background information and analysis and set out options in relation to the issues set out above.

Following advice from TEC officials, the SRG identified these issues as requiring sector consultation. The consultation paper also provided information to the sector on the TEC's intended approach to three related issues which the TEC has determined do not require consultation:

- › Changes to panel membership criteria
- › Panellist training
- › Panel-specific guidelines.

9. Feedback on this consultation paper was invited through an online survey from 1–29 July 2022.
10. A total of 16 responses to the public consultation were received.
11. Of the 16 public submissions, 12 were made on behalf of institutions or organisations, three were individual submissions, and one was made on behalf of a group of researchers.
12. Organisational submissions were received from:
 - a. Auckland University of Technology (AUT)
 - b. Te Herenga Waka-Victoria University of Wellington (VUW)
 - c. Lincoln University
 - d. Massey University
 - e. Ngā Pae o te Māramatanga
 - f. Te Kāhui Amokura (verbal feedback)
 - g. Te Pūkenga
 - h. The Tertiary Education Union (TEU)
 - i. Toi Rauwhārangī College of Creative Arts, Massey University
 - j. The University of Otago
 - k. The University of Waikato
 - l. Waipapa Taumata Rau, the University of Auckland.
13. Quality Evaluation 2018 panel members were invited to complete a separate short online survey about panel workloads. From approximately 250 former panel members who could be contacted, 142 responses were received.
14. Feedback on the proposal to split the Medicine and Public Health panel was also provided by the Public Health Association of New Zealand (PHA) and the New Zealand Association of Clinical Researchers (NZACRES).

Summary of sector response and TEC decisions

15. The TEC and the SRG would like to thank respondents for their thoughtful and detailed feedback and suggestions.
16. Set out below is an issue-by-issue summary of feedback received, including any key concerns or issues raised, followed by the decision which has been made in relation to each issue.
17. In reaching these decisions, the TEC has evaluated the SRG's recommendations against the following criteria to ascertain whether they:
 - › Deliver Cabinet's instructions

- › Address the concerns and aspirations identified in the *Report of the PBRF Review Panel* and the *Report of the Moderation and Peer Review Panels*
 - › Deliver fair and equitable outcomes for all participating TEOs and their staff
 - › Uphold the unique nature of research produced in Aotearoa New Zealand and reflect what is distinctive about our national research environment
 - › Are consistent with the PBRF Guiding Principles, including the three new Principles of partnership, equity, and inclusiveness
 - › Are able to be implemented and audited (legally and practically).
18. The TEC has also evaluated the recommendations against the in-principle decisions made to date on research definitions and EP design, and the decisions on the Moderation Team, to ensure they are in alignment.

Panel chairing arrangements

19. The SRG agreed to consult on a single proposal to adopt a co-chairing model, with at least one Co-Chair required to have expertise in Māori knowledge.

Overall approach: There is universal support for the proposal among respondents

20. Of 14 responses to the proposal, 100 percent were in support.

Respondents had some suggestions and queries about implementing the proposal

21. Massey University and VUW both sought further clarification as to the expected level of expertise in Māori knowledge, and noted that the role description could better signal expectations. VUW additionally sought further information as to how that expertise would be evaluated, and by whom. This point was also raised by staff at the Public Health Association.
22. Te Kāhui Amokura, VUW, and Ngā Pae o te Māramatanga all noted that the pool of potential Co-Chairs Māori was not large, and eligible candidates were likely to be significantly over-committed already. VUW and Ngā Pae o te Māramatanga recommended the SRG consider how to signal expectations to TEOs about acknowledging and compensating staff who take on these roles. Te Kāhui Amokura noted that it will be important to ensure that the workloads of the two Co-Chairs are genuinely equal given the Co-Chairs Māori have specific oversight of cross-referrals to the Māori Knowledge and Development panel and of EPs with elements relevant to Te Ao Māori.
23. AUT supported the proposal but noted that it was important to ensure that all Co-Chairs have knowledge and experience of the PBRF Quality Evaluation. Massey sought clarification as to what constituted 'equivalent PBRF experience' in this context, noting that it was important to understand whether, for example, panel experience on international research assessment exercises would count.
24. Lincoln University, the University of Otago, and the University of Waikato all supported the proposal but suggested that in selecting Co-Chairs it would be desirable to also take into consideration gender balance, subject area expertise, and Pacific research expertise.

TEC decision

Based on the recommendations of the SRG, the TEC has agreed that:

1. Each panel will be led by two Co-Chairs, with the role of Deputy Panel Chair to be disestablished.
2. At least one Co-Chair must have expertise in Māori knowledge. In this context, 'Māori knowledge' should be understood broadly, but indicates a level of expertise distinct from the general requirement that all panellists demonstrate awareness and understanding of Te Tiriti o Waitangi and the significance of Māori-Crown partnership. The Co-Moderator Māori will play a central role in assessing the relevant expertise of nominees for the role of Co-Chair Māori in each peer review panel.
3. The following criteria will be applied when considering suitable candidates for the role of a Panel Co-Chair. Co-Chairs will:
 - › be recognised experts in one of the subject areas within the relevant Panel (essential);
 - › demonstrate awareness and understanding of Te Tiriti o Waitangi and the significance of Māori-Crown partnership (essential);
 - › demonstrate an appreciation of the diverse range of ontologies, epistemologies, knowledges, and research in Aotearoa New Zealand (essential);
 - › have expertise in Māori knowledge (at least one Co-Chair);
 - › have previous experience as a PBRF panel member or equivalent including international research assessment exercises (at least one Co-Chair);
 - › be familiar with quality evaluation processes;
 - › be from a different subject area and/or TEO to the previous Panel Chair (where applicable/feasible); and
 - › be able to commit the necessary time (essential).

It is also expected that Panel Co-Chairs will meet the criteria for Panel Members where those differ from the Co-Chair criteria.

Panels composition criteria

25. The SRG agreed to consult on a single proposal, to set high-level expectations and guidance to Panel Co-Chairs on panel composition, with panel-specific guidance and targets to be developed where necessary.

There is strong support for the proposal but many respondents feel it could go further

26. Of 16 responses to the proposal, 13 supported it, two supported 'another approach', and one did not indicate a choice but made comments indicating general support.

27. Of the respondents preferring another option, one individual response noted that applied and practice-based expertise could be sought outside TEOs, and also raised concerns about the capacity of the cross-referral process to adequately represent interdisciplinary research.
28. Lincoln University, along with Te Kāhui Amokura, Ngā Pae o te Māramatanga, Massey University, University of Auckland, VUW, Te Pūkenga, and Waikato University, who all supported the proposal, raised concerns that setting expectations rather than targets might not be sufficient to ensure that panels were sufficiently diverse and representative across the identified constituencies. Ngā Pae o te Māramatanga noted that this appeared to represent a softening from Quality Evaluation 2018, while the University of Auckland and VUW raised concerns that without targets it would be difficult to hold Panel Chairs to account. VUW additionally noted that the proposal appeared inconsistent with the new PBRF principles and with the broader direction of travel signalled in other changes.
29. Massey University suggested that clearer guidance could be given about when panel-specific targets could be set, in addition to setting hard targets in relation to gender diversity, Māori, Pacific, ECR, and TEO representation. Waikato University and VUW also preferred hard targets.
30. The University of Auckland suggested that Panel Co-Chairs could be 'required' to convene panels that represented diversity across the identified constituencies, rather than 'expected to'. Similarly, Te Pūkenga suggested that Co-Chairs could be 'normally expected to comply' rather than 'expected to comply', and could be required to report on why any specific constituencies were not reflected to the expected level. Lincoln University also supported public reporting on panel membership as a way to ensure diversity.

Some respondents had additional specific suggestions

31. The University of Auckland noted that it would be difficult for Panel Co-Chairs to identify ECRs with the sufficient breadth of experience required, and also expressed concern that panel membership was a significant time investment that could have negative impacts on an ECR's career.
32. The TEU noted that diversity of approach within subject areas was also important alongside ensuring subject area coverage, while VUW noted that language fluency should be a consideration in appointing panels. Lincoln University noted that better representation of applied research was necessary.

TEC decision

Based on the recommendations of the SRG, the TEC has agreed that:

1. Panel Co-Chairs will be required, except where candidates meeting the criteria cannot be found, to appoint panels which reflect the diversity of Aotearoa New Zealand and the PBRF principles of equality and inclusivity, and which specifically include representation of:
 - › Māori researchers
 - › Pacific researchers
 - › The full range of participating TEO types and where appropriate non-TEO research organisations
 - › The full range of career stages including, where candidates meet the criteria, early career researchers
 - › International researchers
 - › New panellists
 - › Practice-based, community-based, or applied research as appropriate
 - › Interdisciplinary research
2. The TEC will report on panel make-up against the groups listed above, as well as on panel gender and ethnic diversity, when panels are announced.

The TEC notes that the panel selection guidance and instructions to Panel Co-Chairs will continue to require coverage across the subject areas included in each Panel. The TEC additionally notes that, as in Quality Evaluation 2018, specific language requirements and individual subject area capacity are best addressed by Co-Chairs once TEOs have provided EP submission intentions.

Medicine and Public Health Panel

33. The SRG consulted on two options: to retain the current Medicine and Public Health panel and its current subject area coverage, or to split it into a Medicine panel (comprising the Biomedical and Clinical Medicine subject areas) and a Public Health panel comprising the Public Health subject area.

Overall sector response: there was clear support for splitting the panel, with some caveats

34. Of the 12 responses received, 10 supported splitting the panel, although a number of responses caveated this support by noting that the express support of medical and public health researchers is needed, and raised some additional concerns.
35. Te Pūkenga did not indicate a preference, but noted that, on the one hand retaining the current panel will better support staff whose research straddles medical and public health, while on the other, splitting the panel will ensure assessment by panel members with appropriately-aligned expertise.
36. Waikato University strongly supported the targeted consultation prior to any decision-making, and also noted that, if workload is the only reason for splitting the panel, it may be more appropriate to simply increase the panel size. Lincoln University and Massey University also noted that their support for the split is contingent on support from the professional bodies and/or relevant researchers.

37. The University of Auckland reported that Medicine and Public Health researchers at the university take the view that the combined panel has worked well, but that given the increase in numbers they support the split on the whole. However, they noted that a split could be unhelpful for research at the increasingly blurred boundary between clinical medicine and public health.
38. Ngā Pae o te Māramatanga also supported the split and noted that the publication profiles of public health researchers can look very different to medical researchers, with a greater emphasis on community engagement. VUW was likewise supportive of the split, and also noted that this creates an opportunity to consider whether other practice-based or applied health research could fit within a Public Health Panel.
39. The University of Otago was supportive of the split and noted that this is based on consultation with public health and medical researchers at the university. Like VUW and Ngā Pae o te Māramatanga, they noted this creates an opportunity to consider the subject area coverage of the Public Health panel.

Overall professional bodies response: there was cautious support for splitting the panels

40. TEC officials invited feedback from relevant professional bodies. Feedback was received from the Public Health Association New Zealand (PHA) and the New Zealand Association of Clinical Researchers (NZACRES).
41. NZACRES expressed support for the proposed split, noting that the expertise required to assess public health versus biomedical research was very different.
42. The PHA canvassed its members who on balance expressed support for the proposed split. The PHA noted that public health was sometimes overshadowed by medical research and that a standalone public health panel would allow research in the field to be assessed in its own right. However, it also noted that it would be important to ensure that research at the public health/clinical or biomedical interface could continue to be properly assessed, and that research taking a holistic view of wellbeing/hauora should be able to be properly assessed regardless of the decision. The PHA also felt that a split provided an opportunity to consider how the public health subject was defined, and in particular to consider how Māori knowledge and approaches to health and medicine could be better reflected.
43. Following the PHA observation that public health research could be disadvantaged by inclusion alongside medical research, TEC officials carried out the analysis below. It shows that in Quality Evaluation 2018, EPs submitted to the Biomedical and Clinical Medicine subject areas in the Medicine and Public Health panel were overrepresented among the A and B Quality Categories awarded, relative to the number of EPs submitted. EPs submitted to the Public Health subject area were underrepresented among the A and B Quality Categories awarded, relative to the number of EPs submitted. This analysis was presented to the SRG and informed the recommendation.

Subject areas	Percentage of total MPH panel submissions 2018	Percentage of A Quality Categories awarded in MPH 2018	Percentage of B Quality Categories awarded in MPH 2018	Percentage of C Quality Categories awarded in MPH 2018	Percentage of unfunded Quality Categories awarded in MPH 2018
Public Health (proposed new Public Health panel)	29.8% (361 EPs)	24.1% (40 EPs)	29% (121 EPs)	36.4% (133 EPs)	13.9% (5 EPs)
Biomedical and Clinical Medicine (proposed new Medicine panel)	70.2% (849 EPs)	75.9% (166 EPs)	71% (296 EPs)	63.6% (232 EPs)	86.1% (31 EPs)

TEC decision

Based on the recommendations of the SRG, the TEC has agreed:

1. To split the Medicine and Public Health panel into two new panels:
 - a. The Medicine panel, covering the Biomedical and Clinical Medicine subject areas.
 - b. The Public Health panel, covering the Public Health subject area.
2. That splitting the Medicine and Public Health panel provides an opportunity to review subject area coverage for both new panels, and that in particular there is an opportunity to consider the Public Health subject area coverage. The TEC will make the feedback available to the Co-Chairs of the two new panels, to support the initial panel member appointments and the development of the Panel-Specific Guidelines.

Panel workloads and Medicine and Public Health panel arrangements

Panel workload consultation

44. The SRG did not set out a proposal for adjusting panel sizes but noted that it may recommend a revised panel member/EP ratio depending on the outcome of consultation with former panel members.
45. The TEC carried out targeted consultations with Quality Evaluation 2018 panel members in relation to panel workloads. Panel members were asked:
 - a. Which panel they sat on for Quality Evaluation 2018; and
 - b. Whether the workload was too much or larger than expected, manageable or about what expected, or less than expected.
46. Approximately 250 panel members were contacted, and 142 responses were received. Responses were received from panel members across all 13 panels, with respondent numbers largely reflecting panel sizes: the largest number of responses were received from Medicine and Public Health, Business and Economics, and Engineering and Technology, and the smallest number from Pacific Research and Māori Knowledge and Development.

47. Across all respondents, 28% reported that the workload was too much or was larger than anticipated. There are some notable variations within panels as the table below shows, with the Education, Māori Knowledge and Development, and the Medicine and Public Health panels all with a significantly higher than average proportion reporting a too-high workload.

Panel	Responses received (percent of overall responses)	Too much or larger than expected workload (percent of panel responses)
Biological Sciences	14 (9.79%)	3 (21%)
Business and Economics	17 (11.89%)	4 (24%)
Creative and Performing Arts	8 (5.59%)	1 (12%)
Education	12 (8.39%)	5 (42%)
Engineering, Technology and Architecture	17 (11.89%)	5 (29%)
Health	14 (9.79%)	3 (21%)
Humanities and Law	11 (7.69%)	3 (27%)
Māori Knowledge and Development	4 (2.8%)	2 (50%)
Mathematical and Information Sciences and Technology	8 (5.59%)	2 (25%)
Medicine and Public Health	17 (11.89%)	7 (41%)
Pacific Research	2 (1.4%)	0
Physical Sciences	7 (4.9%)	1 (14%)
Social Sciences and Other/Cultural Studies	12 (8.39%)	4 (33%)

TEC decision

Based on the recommendations of the SRG, the TEC has agreed to:

1. Retain the existing overall ratio of 35 Evidence Portfolios per panellist in determining panel sizes.
2. Share feedback from 2018 panel members with Panel Co-Chairs to support the panel appointment process.

Renaming the Māori Knowledge and Development panel

48. The SRG agreed to consult on a proposal to rename the Māori Knowledge and Development panel as the Mātauranga Māori panel.

Overall response: there is very strong support for the proposal

49. There is a high level of support, with 100% of the 15 responses received supportive of the proposal.

Further clarity on the definition of 'Mātauranga Māori' is sought, and some respondents raised concerns about potentially narrowing the panel scope

50. Ngā Pae o te Māramatanga and Te Kāhui Amokura broadly supported the proposal, but expressed some reservations that too narrow a definition of Mātauranga Māori could unproductively exclude researchers who might then not be best served by submitting to other panels. Te Kāhui Amokura observed that the removal of 'development' from the panel name could further dissuade researchers who are developing Te Ao Māori aspects of their research practice, but do not consider themselves Mātauranga Māori researchers. The University of Auckland noted that while they supported the removal of 'development' from the panel name, reference to development should be retained in the panel-specific guidance.

51. Ngā Pae o te Māramatanga additionally noted their reservations about the Crown imposing a definition of Mātauranga Māori, while Lincoln University noted that while they were supportive, the panel name should be determined by the panel itself.

52. The TEU noted that it was important to ensure clarity and consistency with other proposed changes such as the proposal for Co-Chairs Māori to have expertise in Māori knowledge more broadly.

TEC decision

Based on the recommendations of the SRG, the TEC has agreed that:

1. The Māori Knowledge and Development Panel will be provisionally renamed the Mātauranga Māori panel.
2. Once appointed, the Co-Chairs and initial panel members will be invited to revisit and confirm the name of the panel when they develop the Panel-Specific Guidance.