

**Tertiary Education  
Commission**

Te Amorangi Mātauranga Matua



**Consultations 5 and 7  
In-Principle decisions and  
summary of feedback: Individual  
Circumstances**



## Consultations 5 and 7: In-Principle decisions and summary of feedback – Individual Circumstances

### Purpose

1. This paper communicates the Tertiary Education Commission's (TEC's) in-principle decisions in relation to individual researcher circumstances as set out in the fifth and seventh consultation papers produced by the PBRF Sector Reference Group (SRG).
2. The paper also provides a summary of feedback on the proposals and options set out in the consultation papers in relation to these issues.

### Background

3. Following Cabinet's decisions in 2021, the PBRF Sector Reference Group (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. The TEC makes in-principle decisions based on SRG recommendations. These 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.

### Recognising the impacts of Covid-19

5. In Consultation Paper 5, the SRG sought the sector's views on how the Quality Evaluation should recognise the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on individual researchers. The approach was one of information-gathering, rather than proposing a set of options.
6. The sector expressed general support for a mechanism of some kind, but raised a range of concerns including about the workload associated with an Extraordinary Circumstances-type approach, as well as how to ensure any mitigation was equitable.
7. Subsequent to the consultation, and following a request by Universities New Zealand, in July 2022 the Minister of Education agreed to a one-year delay in the Quality Evaluation in recognition of the ongoing impacts of COVID-19 on TEOs and individual researchers.
8. Accordingly, the SRG has decided to carry out further consultation on a concrete set of options for recognising the impacts of COVID-19, in order to hear sector views in light of the one-year delay. Consultation will take place at the start of 2023, and in-principle decisions will be communicated to the sector ahead of the publication of the draft Guidelines.

### Next steps

9. The SRG will use the in-principle decisions as the basis for developing the draft Guidelines. These Guidelines will be provided to the sector and other stakeholders for consultation before they are finalised and published in September 2023. Notwithstanding paragraph four above, the purpose of the consultation on the draft guidelines is to ensure that the guidance is consistent, clear and unambiguous, not to re-litigate issues already consulted on.

10. The in-principle decisions reported in this paper will inform the subsequent issues to be considered by the SRG going forward.

## Sector consultation process

11. SRG consultation paper 5 provided background information, analysis, and options for changes to a range of issues relating to individual circumstances. These included:

- › Eligibility criteria for New and Emerging Researchers (NERs)
- › Achievement Relative to Opportunity
- › Extraordinary Circumstances types, wording, and declarations processes
- › Recognising part-time employment
- › Recognising the impacts of COVID-19 on individual researchers' activity during the assessment period
- › Guidance to TEOs on collecting staff ethnicity data for use in the new funding weightings for Māori and Pacific staff.

The SRG noted its intention to consider options relating to NER and Extraordinary Circumstances submission requirements at a second meeting following TEC in-principle decisions on EP design, recognising the options available would be dependent on those decisions.

12. Sector feedback on the consultation paper indicated that the options in relation to NER eligibility criteria and Extraordinary Circumstances declarations processes raised concerns around administrative workload.

13. As a consequence, TEC officials carried out further targeted engagement with PBRF Managers and other research administrators to better understand these concerns. On the basis of feedback gathered during the targeted engagement meetings, SRG consultation paper 7 set out revised proposals for:

- › A broader 'Achievement Relative to Opportunity' concept
- › Eligibility criteria for NERs
- › Extraordinary Circumstances declarations process.

14. Following TEC in-principle decisions on EP design, SRG consultation paper 7 also set out proposals and options for:

- › Part-time employment definition
- › Submission requirements for EPs submitted by NERs, part-time staff, and staff declaring Extraordinary Circumstances.

15. TEC officials directly contacted key stakeholders at universities, Te Pūkenga, the wānanga and PTEs including DVCs Research, Research and PBRF Managers, and Chief Executives, as well as contacting the Tertiary Education Union and sector peak bodies to ensure widespread sector awareness of both consultation papers.

## Respondent summary

### *Consultation 5: Individual Circumstances 1*

16. A total of 22 responses were received to SRG Consultation Paper 5: Individual Circumstances 1.

17. Of these, 12 were made on behalf of institutions or organisations, four were sub-institutional submissions, and six were made by individual researchers.

18. Organisational submissions were received from:

- › Auckland University of Technology (AUT)
- › Te Herenga Waka-Victoria University of Wellington (VUW)
- › Komiti Pasifika
- › Lincoln University
- › Massey University
- › Ngā Pae o te Māramatanga
- › Te Pūkenga
- › The Tertiary Education Union (TEU)
- › The University of Canterbury
- › The University of Otago
- › The University of Waikato
- › Waipapa Taumata Rau, the University of Auckland.

19. Sub-organisational submissions were received from:

- › Faculty of Law, University of Canterbury
- › Massey University College of Humanities and Social Sciences
- › Otago Polytechnic
- › Toi Rauwhāangi College of Creative Arts, Massey University.

20. Of the six individual respondents, one identified as late career, two as mid-career, and two as early-career. Three identified as female, and one as male.

### **Consultation 7: Individual Circumstances 2**

21. A total of 16 responses were received to SRG Consultation Paper 7: Individual Circumstances 2.

22. Of these, 11 were made on behalf of institutions or organisations, three were sub-institutional submissions, and two were made by individual researchers.

23. Organisational submissions were received from:

- › Auckland University of Technology (AUT)
- › Te Herenga Waka-Victoria University of Wellington (VUW)
- › Komiti Pasifika (verbal feedback)
- › Lincoln University
- › Massey University
- › Te Pūkenga
- › The Tertiary Education Union (TEU)
- › The University of Canterbury
- › The University of Otago
- › The University of Waikato
- › Waipapa Taumata Rau, the University of Auckland.

24. Sub-organisational submissions were received from:

- › Faculty of Law, University of Canterbury
- › Otago Polytechnic PBRF Management Group
- › Toi Rauwhāangi College of Creative Arts, Massey University.

## Summary of sector response and In Principle decisions

25. Set out below is an issue-by-issue summary of feedback received, including any key concerns or issues raised, followed by the In Principle decision which has been made in relation to each issue.
26. For clarity, this paper groups the issues consulted on across both consultation papers by subject. Where a proposal was revised and re-consulted on as a consequence of the initial sector feedback, this is noted.
27. Where proposals were revised and re-consulted on, only the feedback to the revised proposals is summarised. This is because the revised proposals already reflect sector feedback on the initial proposal.
28. In reaching these in-principle 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).
29. In addition, the TEC has evaluated the recommendations to ensure they align with TEC decisions and in-principle decisions to date, including on research definitions and EP design.

### *Achievement Relative to Opportunity*

30. The SRG originally consulted on a proposal to rename Extraordinary Circumstances as Achievement Relative to Opportunity, in line with Cabinet's direction. Following the in-principle decisions on EP design and initial sector feedback, the SRG consulted on a revised proposal to use 'Achievement Relative to Opportunity' in a more holistic manner to describe the eligible professional and personal circumstances which impact on a researcher's capacity to carry out research:
- › NER status
  - › Being employed part-time
  - › Experiencing one or more extraordinary circumstances.
31. The SRG additionally proposed to rename the Extraordinary Circumstances provision as 'Individual Circumstances'.

### **Overall approach: there is broad support for the proposal, but some respondents seek further clarity about how it will operate in practice**

32. Of the responses received on this issue, all 15 expressed general support for the concept. However, Lincoln University and VUW expressed some concerns as to how panels would apply

the framework in assessment, and the University of Auckland sought more information on how the concept would apply in practice. Massey University noted that ‘achievement relative to opportunity’ models implied a positive acknowledgement of achievement rather than the deficit model of extraordinary or special circumstances.

### **Some respondents have concerns about renaming Extraordinary Circumstances as Individual Circumstances**

33. While most comments either expressed support for or did not express a view on renaming Extraordinary Circumstances as ‘Individual Circumstances’, Massey University expressed concern that the proposed new name was too broad and removed the focus on uncommon experiences. AUT also noted, while supportive of the change, that the proposed change could result in many more researchers seeking to claim individual circumstances and significant workloads for TEOs. VUW, on the other hand, felt that Individual Circumstances focussed too narrowly on the individual, and that ‘Researcher Circumstances’ was a more inclusive option.

#### **In principle decisions**

Based on the recommendations of the SRG the TEC has agreed in principle that:

- › The proposed Achievement Relative to Opportunity framework will be adopted.
- › The ‘Extraordinary Circumstances’ provision will be renamed as ‘Researcher Circumstances’.

Note that the Achievement Relative to Opportunity framework will include the eligible professional and personal circumstances which have impacted on individual researchers’ capacity to carry out research and research-related activity during the assessment period. These are defined as:

- › Meeting the New and Emerging Researcher eligibility criteria
- › Meeting the part-time employment definition (as defined for the purposes of determining EP submission requirements)
- › Experiencing one or more eligible Researcher Circumstances

### ***New and Emerging Researchers – eligibility criteria***

34. Following sector feedback on the initial options and further targeted consultation with PBRF Managers, the SRG consulted on a revised proposal for NER eligibility criteria which:

- › Replaced the key principle and three criteria with a definition of an NER based on the date at which they became an independent researcher;
- › Defined an independent researcher as holding a contract for research of 0.2FTE or more at any organisation in which the role included the expectation to carry out one or more of the research activities described in the substantiveness test for research; and
- › Clarified that the substantiveness test for research related to activities staff were required to undertake as part of their roles.

### **There is strong support for the proposal, with some residual concerns and suggestions**

35. Of the 15 responses received, 13 supported the new proposal.

36. A number of TEO respondents, while recognising the proposal was clearer and would be more equitable, noted ongoing concerns about the administrative burden associated with verifying the prior employment history of submitting staff.

37. Lincoln University and Toi Rauwhāangi College of Creative Arts both asked whether the proposed clarification in relation to staff who were previous self-employed could be extended to apply to all situations where the application of the substantiveness test to a staff member's prior role returned an inconclusive result.
38. The University of Otago suggested a further adjustment to the substantiveness test for research from 'the academic supervision of graduate research students' to 'the primary academic supervision of research students'. They noted that in 2018, some NERs were deemed ineligible as they had been members of large supervisory groups for Master's level research students while completing their own PhDs.
39. VUW responded that because the paper did not explicitly state that the proposed change to the substantiveness test for research would apply to all submitting staff, it was not possible to reach a view, and sought further information as to how the revised substantiveness test for research interacted with the substantiveness test for teaching.
40. The Otago Polytechnic PBRF Management Group did not support NER eligibility being linked to a submitting staff member's role, on the grounds that many of their staff undertook part-time postgraduate study while employed in roles that included the expectation to carry out research. They felt that this led to those staff being unfairly ineligible for NER status, because due to their part-time studies they often did not produce research during the assessment period. Te Pūkenga's submission, while supportive overall, raised a similar concern.

#### **In principle decision**

Based on the recommendations of the SRG the TEC has agreed in principle that the following eligibility criteria and additional guidance for determining New and Emerging Researchers will be adopted:

- › Definition of a New and Emerging Researcher

*New and Emerging Researchers are defined as members of staff who meet the PBRF staff eligibility criteria at the census date and who first became independent researchers on or after **the start of the assessment period on 1 January 2018.***

*For the purposes of the PBRF Quality Evaluation, an individual is deemed to have become an independent researcher from the date at which they first held a contract of employment of 0.2 FTE or more at any organisation (whether in New Zealand or elsewhere) in which their role included the expectation to carry out one or more of the research activities described in the 'substantiveness test for research'.*

- › The revised substantiveness test for research, for the purposes of determining both PBRF eligibility and New and Emerging status, is as follows:

*Staff members are required to undertake one or more of the following: the design of research activity; the preparation of research outputs (for example, as a co-author or co-producer) that is likely to result in being named as an author (or co-author or co-producer) on one or more research outputs; the academic supervision of graduate research students in a primary, joint, or co-supervisor role.*



- › TEOs should refer to the following clarifications in applying the definition of a New and Emerging Researcher and the substantiveness test for research:
  - a. Staff members who are employed to carry out supervised or non-independent research activity (for example research assistants or postdoctoral research fellows who do not design their own research activity), and students who carry out supervised or non-independent research activity (including research degrees), are not considered to meet the definition of an independent researcher for the purposes of the Quality Evaluation, regardless of whether they carry out activities that would otherwise appear to meet the substantiveness test for research.
  - b. Membership on supervisory teams in non-primary, non-joint, or non-co-supervisory roles is not considered to meet the academic supervision criterion in the substantiveness test for research.
  - c. Job titles are not relevant to determining whether a staff member meets the definition of an independent researcher.
  - d. The independent production of research outputs where that is not a role requirement is not relevant to determining whether a staff member meets the definition of an independent researcher.
  - e. Where a staff member was self-employed prior to commencing a PBRF-eligible role in a TEO, the substantiveness test for research should still be applied; i.e. was the staff member required to carry out research as a function of that self-employed role. Where the application of the substantiveness test for research does not produce a clear outcome, the staff member will not be considered to have met the definition of an independent researcher in that self-employed role.

### **Extraordinary Circumstances – eligible types and revised wording**

41. The SRG consulted on proposals to add the following new types of Extraordinary Circumstances (referred to from here as Researcher Circumstances):

- › Career breaks or interruptions in employment
- › Force majeure.

42. The SRG also consulted on proposals to adjust the proposal to revise the wording of the three previous Researcher Circumstance types to be more inclusive and consistent.

43. In particular, the *Long-term illness or disability* wording proposal was intended to better reflect mental health. The proposed *Extended personal leave* wording was intended to more inclusively reflect the circumstances that lead to parental leave, while the proposed *Significant family or community responsibilities* wording was intended to be more inclusive of the range of caring responsibilities that exist.

#### **Career break or interruptions in employment: there is strong support for the proposal with some concerns**

44. Of the 22 responses, 17 supported adding this Researcher Circumstance type.

45. Massey University expressed conditional support but proposed that career breaks be defined as 'significant career breaks'.

**Force Majeure: there is strong support for the proposal with some concerns**

46. Of the 22 responses, 17 supported adding this Researcher Circumstance type.

47. AUT supported adding *Force majeure* but noted that the criteria and impact on research could be harder to evidence and audit.

48. The University of Otago considered that if this type was added, COVID-19 and Canterbury Earthquakes should be included as specific subheadings.

49. Lincoln University noted that if *Force majeure* were added, the Christchurch terror attack of 2019 should also be recognised as a specific event alongside the Canterbury Earthquakes and COVID-19.

**There are some general concerns about Researcher Circumstances and how their impact is audited**

50. The University of Auckland did not support adding either proposed new type, on the grounds that as professional circumstances or natural events they did not align with what they considered as the personal nature of Researcher Circumstances.

51. VUW did not support adding either proposed new type and suggested that if either or both were added, they should be considered under a separate 'professional circumstances' consideration.

52. Massey University noted it was important that the assessment focus remain on quality, rather than quantity.

**Revised wording of previous types: There is near-universal support for the proposed wording revisions**

53. Of the 20 respondents to this question, 19 supported the revised wording.

54. The University of Otago did not support the revised wording and noted that while they support rewording in principle, they seek a broader understanding of the impact of Researcher Circumstances, and in particular would like to see impact on the 'nature of research' recognised.

**In principle decisions**

Based on the recommendations of the SRG the TEC has agreed in principle that the following types of Researcher Circumstances, as described below, will be eligible:

- › ***Long-term illness or disability*** that has affected the quantity of research outputs produced and/or activities undertaken during the assessment period. This could include physical or mental disability, ill-health or injury, developmental conditions, or other disabilities, health conditions, or diseases that may be progressive or have fluctuating or recurring effects.
- › ***Extended personal leave*** that has affected the quantity of research outputs produced and/or activities undertaken during the assessment period. This could include leave due to shorter-term physical or mental ill health or injury, parental leave relating to fertility, pregnancy, maternity, paternity, adoption, or childcare. Sabbatical leave is not considered in this circumstance.

- › **Significant family or community responsibilities** that have affected the quantity of research outputs produced and/or activities undertaken during the assessment period. This includes responsibility for dependants, including caring for elderly or ill, injured or disabled family group or community members, or responsibilities to specific communities, such as iwi or Pacific communities.
- › **Career breaks or interruptions in employment** that have affected the quantity of research outputs produced and/or activities undertaken during the assessment period. This includes periods where the staff member was not employed in a PBRF-eligible role, or any other role in New Zealand or overseas in New Zealand or overseas, which met the substantiveness test for research, as well as periods of unemployment. Extended personal leave or leave without pay is not included in this circumstance.
- › **Force majeure:** a significant unforeseen natural or human-made event that has affected the quantity of research outputs produced and/or activities undertaken during the assessment period. These may include, but are not limited to, events such as earthquakes, including the ongoing impacts of the Canterbury earthquakes, floods, hurricanes, fire or other severe weather events, volcanic activity, pandemics, armed conflict, or terrorist attacks. The impacts on research must have occurred within the assessment period and meet the six-month summative threshold. The events can have occurred during or prior to the assessment period in New Zealand or anywhere in the world.

Note that the inclusion of pandemics within the *Force majeure* type is not prejudicial to any decision taken on how COVID-19 impacts will be recognised.

Note that across all eligible types, the circumstance/s must have impacted on the staff member's ability to carry out research activity for a minimum of six months in total during the assessment period (this does not need to be a single period of time). This duration is in line with the New Zealand Disability Strategy.

### **Researcher Circumstances – declarations process**

55. Following in-principle decisions on EP design and initial sector feedback, the SRG consulted on a revised proposal for the way in which Researcher Circumstances declarations are made and verified.

56. In line with Cabinet's instructions and the in-principle decision that Researcher Circumstances will be recognised through reduced EP submission requirements, rather than through panels' assessment of the impacts of the circumstances, the proposal is that submitting staff would be invited to voluntarily declare to their TEO the type of Researcher Circumstance they wished to claim and the total duration of the impact of the circumstance over the assessment period. TEOs would use these declarations to determine the staff member's EP submission requirements, but the declarations would not be submitted as part of the EP. TEOs would be responsible for developing an auditable process for inviting declarations and for validating the length of impact.

**Overall response: there is near-universal support for staff making voluntary declarations to TEOs that aren't shared with panels, with some concerns about how the information is used**

57. Of the 15 responses, 14 supported the proposal.

58. Lincoln University did not support the proposal, citing privacy issues and concerns about administrative workload. Officials note that the concerns raised are important ones but did not reflect the proposal consulted on.
59. The TEU supported the proposal but sought assurances that a staff member's choice to make or to not make a declaration were not used as disciplinary measures by TEOs.
60. AUT noted that some staff could feel concerned that the 'assessment' of the impact of their circumstances was being made by their TEO; the University of Canterbury and the Faculty of Law, University of Canterbury similarly queried whether a separate process was required for situations in which the staff member did not feel it was appropriate for the TEO to assess their declarations (such as where the circumstance arose from a serious employment dispute or dispute over academic freedom).
61. The University of Auckland expressed concern that if declarations were voluntary, staff might choose not to make a declaration in order to be able to submit three Examples of Research Excellence.

**Respondents sought further detail about validation of declarations and audit of TEO processes**

62. A number of respondents noted that while they supported the proposal, the potential administrative workload was high, and further detail was particularly sought around how TEOs should obtain evidence sufficient to validate declarations where internal records were not sufficient.
63. Respondents also sought further guidance about what considerations would inform the audit of TEO processes.

**In principle decision**

Based on the recommendations of the SRG the TEC has agreed in principle that the process for inviting and validating Researcher Circumstances declarations will be as follows:

- › TEOs develop a process for inviting voluntary staff declarations of researcher circumstances and for ensuring the total duration of the impacts declared meets the minimum time period of six months total across the assessment period. Declarations will be used by the TEO to determine the submission requirements for the EP, and the type of Researcher Circumstance will be noted in the EP for panellists' information. Information in the declarations is not submitted as part of the EP and panellists will not make any assessment of declared Researcher Circumstances.
- › Staff make voluntary declarations to TEOs. Declarations comprise the category of circumstance (for example: *Long-term illness or disability*) and the total duration of time the circumstance impacted on their ability to carry out research activity during the assessment period (for example: 2 years' total period of impact). Declarations do not have to include any description of the circumstance/s or impact statements. Declarations do not ordinarily include any personal information or records where the staff member has previously disclosed the circumstance to their employing TEO. Where the staff member has not previously disclosed the circumstance, they will need to provide sufficient information to enable the TEO to validate the category of circumstance and the duration of impact.

- › While declarations must be voluntary, it is the responsibility of TEOs to ensure researcher circumstances declarations are valid and have led to the declared duration of impact. For the avoidance of doubt, where a staff member has not previously provided, and chooses not to provide information sufficient to validate a declaration, the TEO should not validate the declaration.

Note that the processes for inviting and validating declarations established by TEOs are audited during the Process Assurance phase. In developing the audit methodology with the auditors, the TEC will consider how to ensure that TEO processes comply with the PBRF Quality Evaluation 2026 Guidelines and all relevant legislation including the Employment Relations Act 2000, the Privacy Act 2020, and the Human Rights Act 1993.

The TEC will also consider whether any sample-based auditing of TEOs' calculations to determine EP submission requirements based on Achievement Relative to Opportunity is necessary. Any proposed changes to the audit methodology will be consulted on to ensure they will provide robust assurance in the process.

### **Researcher circumstances – Canterbury Earthquakes**

64. The SRG consulted on four options for recognising the ongoing impacts of the Canterbury Earthquakes:

- › **Option 1:** The standalone provision is removed altogether
- › **Option 2:** The standalone provision is retained as in the Quality Evaluation 2018 Guidelines
- › **Option 3:** The five Canterbury impact types are combined into a single type, *Ongoing impacts of Canterbury Earthquakes*
- › **Option 4:** The five Canterbury impact types are combined into a single type, *Ongoing impacts of Canterbury Earthquakes*, which is included within a new *Force majeure* type

**Overall response: there is significant support for Option 4**

65. Of the 20 respondents to this question, 17 preferred some version of Option 4: to combine the existing five impact types within a *Force majeure* extraordinary circumstance type, including Lincoln University.

66. The University of Canterbury initially indicated in written feedback that it supported Option 2: the provision is retained as it was 2018. Subsequently the University has indicated it is comfortable with Option 4.

#### **In principle decision**

Based on the recommendations of the SRG the TEC has agreed in principle that, for Quality Evaluation 2026, the five Canterbury Earthquakes impact types recognised in the Quality Evaluation 2018 Guidelines will be combined into a single Researcher Circumstances type recognising the ongoing impacts of the Canterbury Earthquakes, and included within the new *Force majeure* extraordinary circumstance type (see recommended wording of *Force majeure*).

### **Part-time employment definition**

67. In Consultation Paper 5, the SRG consulted on whether part-time employment should be recognised as an Extraordinary Circumstance type, or whether a relationship between part-time employment and EP submission requirements should be otherwise formalised.

68. Following in-principle decisions on EP design, including the decision that part-time employment should result in reduced submission requirements, further analysis of Quality Evaluation 2018 submission data, and initial sector feedback, the SRG consulted on a revised proposal for recognising part-time employment.

69. The revised proposal defined part-time employment, for the purposes of determining EP submission requirements only, as holding a contract or contracts for employment during the assessment period that:

- › At any one time totalled less than 1.0 FTE; **and**
- › In total comprised a maximum of 0.8 FTE across the duration of the staff member's employment during the assessment period.

**Overall response: there was support in principle for the proposal, but TEOs have concerns about administrative burden and seek further clarity on applying the definition**

70. Of the 15 responses, 11 expressed outright or qualified support for the definition. A number of respondents noted that calculating a staff member's overall FTE across the assessment period, particularly if they were employed at another TEO during that time, would create additional administrative work.

71. Massey University and the University of Waikato, while supportive, both asked how the part-time calculation would take career breaks into consideration.

72. Some responses indicated that the relationship between calculating FTE at census date for the purposes of determining PBRF eligibility and funding allocations, and calculating FTE across the assessment period for the purpose of determining EP submission requirements, was not sufficiently clear.

73. The University of Auckland, VUW, Lincoln University, and Otago Polytechnic did not support the proposal, noting that they considered the administrative workload and complexity of calculating FTE would be too onerous.

#### **In principle decision**

Based on the recommendations of the SRG the TEC has agreed in principle that the following definition and guidance will be used by TEOs to determine which of their PBRF-eligible staff qualify as part-time for the purposes of determining EP submission requirements:

- › Part-time researcher definition

*For the purposes of determining EP submission requirements a PBRF-eligible staff member is considered to be employed part-time if they:*

*Held a relevant contract or contracts for employment during the assessment period that:*

- a. At any one time totalled less than 1.0 FTE; **and***
- b. in total comprised a maximum of 0.8 FTE across the duration of the staff member's employment during the assessment period.*

- › Note that:
  - a. Only contracts for roles that qualify the staff member for PBRF eligibility or non-TEO roles that meet the substantiveness test for research are relevant in calculating a staff member’s FTE for this purpose. As in Quality Evaluation 2018, in order to be considered PBRF eligible, a staff member’s role must be a minimum of 0.2 FTE.
  - b. As in Quality Evaluation 2018, 1.0 FTE is defined as 37.5 hours a week. This applies for the purposes of all FTE calculations.
  - c. Applying the definition of ‘part time’ for the purposes of determining EP submission requirements is separate from the process of calculating FTE for the purposes of determining PBRF staff eligibility and funding allocations.
  - d. All relevant roles must be included in calculating FTE across the assessment period, including where the staff member changed employer.
  - e. In calculating FTE across the assessment period, periods where the staff member was not employed in **any** PBRF-eligible role, or any other role which met the substantiveness test for research, should be excluded. Such periods can be claimed under the *Career breaks* Researcher Circumstance type.

The SRG noted the sector’s concerns that applying this definition is a new administrative step but noted that alternative approaches either do not fully address the existing equity issues or may create new inequities. TEC officials will continue to engage with TEOs to ensure that there is clear guidance and consistent understanding of this new definition and process, supported by and reflected in the Guidelines.

### **EP submission requirements**

74. Following decisions on EP design, the SRG consulted on options for submission requirements for EPs submitted by staff to whom one or more of the following applies:

- › The submitting staff member is a New and Emerging Researcher;
- › The submitting staff member is employed part-time;
- › The submitting staff member has declared eligible Researcher Circumstances.

### **EP submission requirements – New and Emerging Researchers**

75. The SRG consulted on two options for EP submission requirements for EPs submitted by NER staff:

- › **Option 1:** Eligible NERs submitted either one or two EREs, depending on when they first became eligible;
- › **Option 2:** Eligible NERs submitted a minimum of one or two EREs, depending on when they first became eligible, and could choose to submit up to three EREs.

### **Overall response: There is strong support for Option 2**

76. Of the 16 responses received, 14 supported Option 2: eligible NERs have a set minimum requirement depending on when they became eligible but retain the choice to submit up to

three EREs. The main reason given was the need for NERs to have the flexibility to determine the number of EREs that best represented their research output across the assessment period.

77. Among institutional responses, Te Pūkenga supported Option 1, noting that this option better supports the focus on research quality over quantity, and addresses the observable behaviour in previous Quality Evaluations where the maximum of four NROs was treated as a de-facto requirement.

#### **In principle decision**

Based on the recommendations of the SRG the TEC has agreed in principle that the following EP submission requirements will apply:

- › A staff member who first became eligible as a New and Emerging Researcher from 1 January 2018 – 31 December 2021 inclusive submits an EP that contains a **minimum of two EREs** (each containing a research output, narrative, and up to three supplementary items), up to eight OEREs, and up to 10 CREs. The staff member may choose to submit **three EREs**.
- › A staff member who first became eligible as a New and Emerging Researcher from 1 January 2022 – 31 December 2025 submits an EP that contains a **minimum of one ERE** (containing a research output, narrative, and up to three supplementary items), up to eight OEREs, and up to 10 CREs. The staff member may choose to submit **up to three EREs**.
- › EPs submitted by New and Emerging Researchers continue to be eligible for the C(NE) and R(NE) Quality Categories as well as A and B Quality Categories.

Note that so long as an EP meets the minimum submission requirements, the number of items in the EP, including EREs, will not be considered in and of itself as part of its assessment and does not affect the Quality Categories that can be awarded. Assessors and panels will assess all EPs that have met the submission requirements according to the same criteria, regardless of the number of EREs or the number of supplementary items within each ERE.

#### **EP submission requirements – part-time staff**

78. The SRG consulted on two options for EP submission requirements for EPs submitted by part-time staff:

- › **Option 1:** Part-time staff submitted either one or two EREs, depending on their total FTE fraction across the assessment period;
- › **Option 2:** Part-time staff submitted a minimum of one or two EREs, depending on their total FTE fraction across the assessment period, and could choose to submit up to three EREs.

#### **Overall response: There was strong support for Option 2, but some further clarity is sought**

79. Of the 16 responses received, 12 support Option 2: part-time staff have a set minimum requirement depending on total FTE fraction, but retain the choice to submit up to three EREs. As for the NER submission requirements, the main reason given was the need for staff to have the flexibility to determine the number of EREs that best represented their research output across the assessment period.



80. Among institutional responses, Te Pūkenga supported Option 1 for the same reasons as for the NER submission requirements. The University of Waikato noted that there were differing views across the institution, but that they recognised part-time researchers often felt pressure to submit the ‘maximum’ number of outputs, and that setting a fixed number of EREs would both remove that pressure and would address the equity concerns set out in the consultation paper.
81. The TEU did not support either option, preferring instead that all part-time staff retain the flexibility to submit between one and three EREs, regardless of total FTE fraction across the assessment period.
82. The University of Auckland queried why no reduction in OERE and CRE submission requirements had been proposed.
83. Lincoln University and the University of Otago sought clarity that if a part-time staff member submitted three EREs, their part-time status would effectively not be taken into consideration.

#### **In principle decision**

Based on the recommendations of the SRG the TEC has agreed in principle that the following EP submission requirements will apply:

- › A staff member who is employed 0.5 – 0.8 FTE in total across the duration of their employment during the assessment period submits an EP containing a **minimum of two EREs** (each containing a research output, narrative, and up to three supplementary items), up to eight OEREs, and a minimum of one and up to 10 CREs. The staff member may choose to submit **three EREs**.
- › A staff member who is employed 0.2 – 0.49 FTE in total across the duration of their employment during the assessment period submits an EP containing a **minimum of one ERE** (containing a research output, narrative, and up to three supplementary items), up to eight OEREs, and a minimum of one and up to 10 CREs. The staff member may choose to submit **up to three EREs**.

Note that so long as an EP meets the minimum submission requirements, the number of items in the EP, including EREs, will not be considered in and of itself as part of its assessment and does not affect the Quality Categories that can be awarded. Assessors and panels will assess all EPs that have met the submission requirements according to the same criteria, regardless of the number of EREs or the number of supplementary items within each ERE.

#### **EP submission requirements – Researcher Circumstances**

84. The SRG consulted on a single proposal: staff members claiming Researcher Circumstances will submit either one or two EREs, depending on the total duration of impact across the assessment period.
85. The single proposal reflected the fact that, unlike NER or part-time status, declaring Researcher Circumstances is a voluntary provision specifically designed to reflect where a staff member’s eligible circumstances have impacted on the quantity of research outputs and activities they have been able to produce in the assessment period. Staff members who do not feel that their ability to produce research has been impacted by Researcher Circumstances during the assessment period can choose not to make a declaration.

**Overall response: There was strong support for the proposal, but some concerns remain**

86. Of the 15 responses received, 10 support the proposal. Some respondents continued to express concern that setting fixed EP submission requirements would disadvantage staff who have experienced impacts from Researcher Circumstances but who still wish to submit three EREs.
87. The University of Auckland noted that the proposal depended on Panels training to ensure ERE number did not impact on assessments of quality.
88. AUT noted that an ERE can contain both research outputs and research activities, and asked whether it would be more equitable to distinguish between set requirements for research outputs and research activities.

**In principle decision**

Based on the recommendations of the SRG the TEC has agreed in principle that the following EP submission requirements will apply for PBRF-eligible staff who have declared, and had validated, eligible Researcher Circumstances:

- › Where there has been an impact on the staff member's ability to carry out research activity for between six months and four years in total during the assessment period, a staff member submits an EP containing **two EREs** (each containing a research output, narrative, and up to three supplementary items), up to eight OEREs, and a minimum of one and up to 10 CREs.
- › Where there has been an impact on the staff member's ability to carry out research activity for more than four years in total during the assessment period, a staff member submits an EP containing **one ERE** (containing a research output, narrative, and up to three supplementary items), up to eight OEREs, and a minimum of one and up to 10 CREs.
- › So long as an EP meets the submission requirements, the number of items in the EP will not be considered as part of its assessment. Assessors and Panels will assess all EPs that have met the agreed submission requirements according to the same criteria, regardless of the number of EREs or the number of supplementary items within each ERE.

Note that declaring Researcher Circumstance/s is a matter of individual choice for each submitting staff member.

**Staff ethnicity data collection and reporting processes**

89. The SRG consulted on a proposal for ensuring fair and transparent collection and reporting of staff ethnicity data. This included:
- › A statement in the Guidelines setting out the TEC's expectations that staff ethnicity declarations remain voluntary;
  - › The audit process includes scrutiny of TEO staff data collection, recording, and processing processes;
  - › A requirement that the chief executive officer of the submitting TEO sign a declaration that staff data has been collected and reported in line with the Privacy Act 2020.

In addition, the proposal included the continued use of Level 3 coding for staff to identify as Pacific. Full details can be found at paragraphs 107-111, Appendix 1.

**Overall response: TEOs support some aspects of the proposal, but require clarity as to what is being asked of them**

90. Of the three elements of the proposal, a statement in the Guidelines and a declaration by the chief executive officer were supported by around half of respondents. Komiti Pasifika supported all three elements, noting that safeguards were necessary to ensure staff data collection processes were transparent and fair.
91. Of TEOs, only the University of Canterbury, University of Otago, and Waikato University, along with Te Pūkenga, supported the audit of TEO's staff data collection processes. However, detailed feedback suggests that a number of respondents misinterpreted this element as an audit of the staff data itself.
92. Some respondents appeared to have interpreted the proposal as requiring staff to declare their ethnicity, or as seeking feedback on whether the collection of staff data via the staff data file should be reviewed.

**Pacific ethnicity coding: some respondents would prefer a more granular coding level**

93. Eight of the 16 responses indicated comfort with the proposed Level 3 coding. The majority of other responses were concerned with ethical questions relating to collecting ethnicity data, or deferred to Pacific colleagues. Three respondents, including Komiti Pasifika, felt that the Level 3 coding was insufficiently granular, and did not enable staff members to identify with multiple ethnicities. Komiti Pasifika additionally raised concerns about staff inappropriately identifying as Pacific. While these are important concerns, they do not directly relate to the issues on which we were consulting.

**In principle decision**

Based on the recommendations of the SRG the TEC has agreed in principle that that to ensure staff ethnicity data is collected and reported in a fair and transparent manner, the following will be adopted:

- › A statement in the Guidelines setting out the TEC's expectations that staff ethnicity declarations remain voluntary;
- › The audit process will include scrutiny of TEO staff data collection, recording, and processing **processes** (note that staff data will not be audited);
- › The chief executive officer of the submitting TEO will be required to sign a declaration that staff data has been collected and reported in line with the Privacy Act 2020; and
- › Statistics New Zealand Level 3 coding will continue to be used for collecting and reporting Pacific ethnicity.

