

**Tertiary Education
Commission**

Te Amorangi Mātauranga Matua



Consultation 12

**In-Principle decisions and summary of
feedback: TEO and Assessment
Guidelines for Quality Evaluation
2026**

Consultation 12 In-Principle decisions and summary of feedback: TEO and Assessment Guidelines for Quality Evaluation 2026

Purpose

1. This paper communicates the Tertiary Education Commission's (TEC's) in-principle decisions in relation to changes to the draft guidelines for Quality Evaluation 2026 produced by the PBRF Sector Reference Group (SRG).
2. The paper also provides a summary of sector feedback on the draft guidelines, and a summary of minor changes to the draft guidelines which do not require in-principle decisions.

Background

3. Following Cabinet's decisions on changes to the PBRF Quality Evaluation in 2021, the SRG was convened by the TEC to advise on operational design changes to the Quality Evaluation. Since it was stood up in September 2021, the SRG has delivered 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 SRG has now made recommendations to the TEC on all issues identified for consideration as set out in the first consultation paper, *Approach to the Design of Quality Evaluation 2026*. The TEC has agreed in principle to a series of design and process changes on the basis of the SRG's recommendations.
5. These changes have informed the draft guidelines for Quality Evaluation 2026. The guidelines are the main output of the SRG process, and the key source of guidance for TEOs participating in the exercise. As in previous Quality Evaluations, the main guidelines comprise two documents: the *Guidelines for TEOs participating in Quality Evaluation 2026* (TEO Guidelines) and the *Guidelines for the Quality Evaluation 2026 assessment process* (Assessment Guidelines)

Next steps

6. The final TEO Guidelines and Assessment Guidelines, incorporating all in principle decisions (including the minor changes summarised in this paper) will be considered by the TEC Board in late November 2023.
7. The final guidelines will be published on 30 November 2023.

Consultation process

8. In July 2023, the SRG agreed to consult on draft TEO Guidelines and Assessment Guidelines incorporating the design changes that had been agreed in principle. The draft guidelines also included three proposals for specific changes following sector feedback on the Reporting issues consultation. The draft guidelines, including the proposals, can be found on the [TEC website](#).
9. Public consultation on the draft TEO Guidelines and Assessment Guidelines ran from 11 August – 22 September 2023. 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 the consultation.

Respondent summary

10. A total of 11 responses were received. Of these, ten were made on behalf of institutions or representative organisations. One response was received from Unitec, a tertiary provider that is now part of Te Pūkenga.

11. Organisational submissions were received from:

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

Sector feedback Quality Evaluation 2026 draft Guidelines and final proposals

12. The sector feedback on the draft guidelines fell into three categories:

- › Issues which required an SRG recommendation and TEC in-principle decision, including the three proposed changes consulted on through the draft guidelines. These issues related to previous in-principle decisions, or are substantive in nature;
- › Issues which required TEC review and potential revision of wording in the guidelines but which are not substantive; and
- › Issues which can be addressed without any revision of the guidelines (including issues relating to the audit methodology).

13. Issues in the first category are discussed below in Section A. Issues in the second two categories are summarised in the table in Section B.

Section A: Summary of sector response and In-Principle decisions

14. The following issues raised in the sector feedback were identified as requiring an SRG recommendation and TEC in-principle decision:

- › Proposal to use Australian and New Zealand Standard Research Classification (ANZSRC) codes to populate the 'Field of Research' field
- › Proposal to include an 'EP Language Field' in the EP
- › Proposal to update the 'Software' research output type description

- › The inclusion of the Achievement Relative to Opportunity (ARO) framework background/rationale chapter
 - › New and Emerging Researcher criteria: clarification around prior Quality Evaluation eligibility
 - › New and Emerging Researcher criteria: clarifying ‘non-independent research’
 - › Part-time staff members: verifying FTE where staff members choose to submit three EREs
 - › ‘Platform of Research – Contextual Summary’ character limit
 - › Examples of Research Excellence terminology.
15. 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.
16. In reaching these in-principle decisions, TEC officials have 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, and
 - › Are able to be implemented and audited (legally and practically).
17. In addition, officials have evaluated the recommendations to ensure they align with our earlier in-principle decisions.

Use of ANZSRC codes to populate ‘Field of Research’ field

18. The draft TEO Guidelines included a proposal to introduce ANZSRC codes as a replacement for the free text box previously used to enter the ‘Field of Research’ in the EP. This proposal was made by the University of Otago as part of feedback on the Technical Matters/EP Design consultation.
- There is qualified support for the proposal but many respondents want to retain a free text field**
19. Of the ten responses received to this question, six expressed some degree of support for the proposal.
20. AUT and VUW did not support the proposal, while Canterbury and Waikato did not express a preference.
21. With the exception of Auckland and Otago, all respondents, including those who supported the proposal, expressed some concerns about completely removing a free text field option. In particular, there were concerns that inter- and transdisciplinary research would lose visibility. Several responses noted that a free text field would need to be retained for the ‘99’ (Other) code

and for trans- and interdisciplinary research, and Lincoln and Massey suggested retaining a general free text field alongside the ANZSRC codes.

22. AUT suggested that too many researchers would need to select the '99' code to make the exercise worthwhile and noted that it could also exacerbate researcher concerns that their EPs had been incorrectly assigned to panel members within their panel. VUW had concerns about the need for staff training and noted that many staff would want a free text field regardless.

In principle decision

Based on the recommendation of the SRG, the TEC has agreed in principle that the existing 'Field of Research' free text field in the EP will be retained, and that the proposal to use ANZSRC codes will not be adopted.

EP Language Field

23. The draft Guidelines included a proposal to include an 'EP Language' field in the EP to indicate if any languages other than English are used in any of the ERE Outputs. This proposal was based on feedback submitted by VUW as part of feedback on the Reporting consultation.

There is universal support for the proposal but the purpose requires clarification

24. Of the nine responses received, all expressed support for the proposal. However, some comments suggested a misunderstanding about the purpose of the proposal and the information in the TEO Guidelines around outputs in languages other than English and translation.
25. Officials note that panel language capacity is provided for based on the estimates of EP numbers and subject areas, which will occur approximately 6-12 months ahead of the final submission date. This allows supplementary panel members to be appointed as needed based on expected submissions. This process is unchanged from Quality Evaluation 2018.
26. The TEO Guidelines on translations and panel capability are also unchanged from 2018: translations can be supplied by TEOs but the TEC will not arrange or fund translations where a panel does not have language capability. While some panels will have some language capability (in particular the Mātauranga Māori Panel, the Pacific Research Panel, and the Humanities and Law Panel, which includes Modern Languages), this cannot be assumed for all panels.
27. Auckland queried whether a free text field or a drop-down list would be used, and what the source of a list would be, while Waikato noted that a drop-down list should allow only English, Te Reo, or Pacific languages, to signal that outputs in other languages should be translated.

In principle decision

Based on the recommendation of the SRG, the TEC has agreed in principle that a Language Field will be added to the EP, and that a list of languages will be used to populate the field.

Officials note that:

- › TEC will provide a list in the final TEO Guidelines. The list will comprise the official languages of Aotearoa New Zealand along with the top ten most commonly-spoken languages (Statistics NZ), nine Pacific languages, and all languages which were included in EPs submitted in 2018.

- › As in 2018, the indicative EP submission process will occur approximately 6-12 months ahead of the submission date, and will enable TEOs to indicate the languages in which they anticipate submitting EREs. This information will be used by Panel Co-Chairs to support their final panel appointments.

Update to Software research output type description

28. The draft TEO Guidelines included a proposal to update the Software research output type description to better reflect current practice. This proposal was made by Auckland as part of feedback on the EP design consultation.

There is strong support for the proposal

29. Of the seven responses received, six expressed support for the revised description.

30. Auckland made additional comments on the evidence requirements for software submitted as an ERE Output. These will be actioned by officials and have been summarised in Section B below.

In principle decision

Based on the recommendations of the SRG, the TEC has agreed in principle to the following description of the Software research output type:

Originally researched, created, and published or otherwise publicly disseminated software (computer programs and their associated documentation, consisting of a set of instructions written by a programmer) or a curated database of significant research data. These artifacts shall be refined products offered commercially or online or distributed as open source through a recognised publisher or distributor.

Includes:

System software

- › operating systems
- › programming languages
- › control systems.

Application software

- › data analysis and visualisation
- › simulation
- › machine learning and artificial intelligence systems
- › collaborative systems
- › domain specific applications
- › curated databases.

Excludes:

- › databases of references or material for supporting research programmes of individual researchers.

Achievement Relative to Opportunity background/rationale

31. Auckland, Canterbury, Lincoln, Massey and VUW all noted that the inclusion of an Achievement Relative to Opportunity (ARO) framework background chapter was unnecessary to the Guidelines' purpose in setting out the process and rules TEOs need to follow.
32. The draft TEO Guidelines include a three-page chapter on the new ARO framework. This sets out the background to the framework including the changes made to the previous Extraordinary Circumstances settings and new and emerging researcher (NER) criteria and submission requirements, and the rationale for those changes. Guidance on applying the new framework is provided in a separate chapter.
33. The chapter was included because sector feedback on SRG consultations over the course of 2022 and early 2023 suggested there was a need for additional explanation of the rationale behind the ARO framework, and in particular how it resulted in a more equitable process and outcomes.

In principle decision

Based on the recommendations of the SRG, the TEC has agreed in principle to retain the ARO framework background chapter.

New and Emerging Researcher criteria: clarification around prior Quality Evaluation eligibility

There was an error in the draft TEO Guidelines and the TEC will correct it

34. A number of respondents including Auckland, Lincoln, Te Pūkenga, Waikato and VUW sought clarification as to whether previous PBRF eligibility was a criterion in determining NER status.
35. This was because the draft TEO Guidelines included a table of worked examples of staff members and their NER status, and a decision-making tree, both of which incorrectly included the 2018 criterion that previous PBRF eligibility means a staff member cannot be NER (see pages 45-47 in the draft TEO Guidelines). This was an error. Previous PBRF eligibility is not a criterion for determining NER eligibility for Quality Evaluation 2026.

Improving the guidance on applying the new NER definition

36. The new NER definition means that TEO staff members who:
 - › meet the revised research substantiveness test, i.e. they became independent researchers for the first time during the 2018-2025 assessment period **and**
 - › were PBRF-eligible in a previous assessment round solely based on meeting the teaching substantiveness testmay now be eligible as NERs in Quality Evaluation 2026.
37. In reviewing sector feedback on the NER definition guidance, officials noted it would be helpful to explicitly clarify that such staff can be considered new and emerging only if they have not previously submitted an EP in a Quality Evaluation.

In principle decision

Based on the recommendations of the SRG, the TEC has agreed in principle that the following clarification will be added to the guidance on applying the New and Emerging Researcher Criteria:

- › Staff members who have submitted EPs in previous Quality Evaluations cannot be considered New and Emerging for Quality Evaluation 2026.

New and Emerging Researcher criteria: status of postdoctoral fellows

38. Lincoln and Massey sought further clarity on the status of postdoctoral fellows when considering New and Emerging status, both noting that varying degrees of independence may exist across such roles.
39. The revised NER criteria include a clarification that staff members such as research assistants and postdoctoral fellows who carry out supervised or non-independent research activity are not considered to meet the definition of an independent researcher.
40. This clarification was introduced following sector feedback that the 2018 Guidelines did not provide sufficient guidance on whether such staff should be considered as independent researchers.
41. Lincoln noted that many postdoctoral fellows may be working under a research leader on an overall research project, but may be free to define their own research activities within that project, and queried how this would not be considered independent research.

In principle decision

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

- › the NER criteria guidance should clarify that job descriptions and employment expectations should be used to determine staff members' research independence, rather than job titles; and
- › reference to postdoctoral fellows is removed from the examples of staff who carry out supervised or non-independent research.

The relevant guidance will now read:

Staff members who are employed to:

- carry out supervised or non-independent research activity (for example research assistants or other staff members 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.

Part-time staff members: administrative workload associated with verifying average FTE across assessment period

42. Auckland, Lincoln, Massey, Otago, Te Pūkenga, and VUW all noted concerns that the Part-Time FTE declaration requirement will create a significant administrative workload, particularly where staff members have had multiple eligible roles across the assessment period, potentially at different TEOs.

43. Under the ARO framework, staff members' average FTE over the assessment period is now taken into account in determining submission options. This change is designed to formally recognise that staff members who are employed less than full-time in PBRF-eligible roles have reduced opportunities to carry out research relative to colleagues employed full-time.
44. Staff members who meet the definition of part-time employment have the option, depending on whether their total average FTE is up to 0.49 or 0.5 – 0.8, to choose to submit one, two, or three EREs.
45. The Audit Methodology has been updated to reflect the ARO framework. If asked by the auditors, TEOs will now need to be able to demonstrate they have developed robust processes for identifying and validating the average FTE of all part-time staff members.
46. Auckland, Massey, Otago, Te Pūkenga and VUW suggested that the verification requirement should be waived for part-time staff who choose to submit three EREs. They noted that as such staff would not be using the option to have reduced submission requirements, verification of their average FTE would deliver little material benefit.

In principle decision

Based on the recommendations of the SRG, the TEC has agreed in principle that TEOs will not be required to verify the declared average FTE category of staff submitting as part-time if they choose to submit three EREs. It will remain essential that these staff declare and TEOs' report their part-time status and average FTE category (either up to 0.49 FTE or 0.5 – 0.8 FTE).

Note that:

- › All part-time staff have the option to submit fewer than three EREs. This is an individual choice
- › Where part-time staff choose to submit three EREs, TEOs will still be required to report their part-time status and average FTE category in the staff data file
- › TEOs will still be accountable for the information provided by staff claiming part-time status where any discrepancy is found between a staff member's declared average FTE category and other information submitted through the Staff Data File or held by the TEO
- › TEC will provide a tool to assist TEOs and their staff in calculating their FTE in accordance with the guidelines.

Platform of Research – Contextual Summary character limit

47. Te Pūkenga and AUT requested that the character limit of the Platform of Research – Contextual Summary field is increased.
48. The draft TEO Guidelines include a reduced character limit of 1,500 for the Platform of Research – Contextual Summary section. This was reduced from a limit of 2,500, which applied in Quality Evaluation 2018, because the new EP structure provides other narrative opportunities through the ERE Contextual Narrative. The introduction of the ARO framework means that staff members will no longer use this field to describe how any Researcher Circumstances have impacted on their opportunity to carry out research.
49. AUT requested that the character limit be increased if the proposal to replace the free-text Field of Research field with ANZSRC codes is adopted. This is so that inter- and transdisciplinary staff members have space to describe their area of research and are not disadvantaged relative to staff members with a single disciplinary focus.

50. Te Pūkenga also requests that limit be increased on the grounds that removing the need to discuss ARO framework circumstances does not fully account for the 1,000-character reduction.

In principle decision

Based on the recommendations of the SRG, the TEC has agreed in principle that the Platform of Research – Contextual Summary character limit will remain 1,500.

Examples of Research Excellence terminology

51. AUT, Canterbury, Lincoln, Otago, and Te Pūkenga noted that they found the duplication of terms (particularly ERE) confusing.

52. Cabinet’s decisions on changes to the design of the Quality Evaluation included replacing the Research Output component in an Evidence Portfolio with the Examples of Research Excellence component (ERE component), replacing the Nominated Research Output with the Example of Research Excellence (ERE), and replacing the Other Research Output with the Other Example of Research Excellence (OERE).

53. The EP structure which has been agreed in principle defines an ERE as a contextual narrative, a research output submitted for examination, and up to three optional supplementary items, which can be either research outputs or research activities. The draft TEO Guidelines put out for consultation used the term ‘ERE Output’ for the research output submitted for examination. This was chosen over other terms, such as ‘core research output’ or ‘selected research output’, as a more neutral term.

54. AUT and Otago suggested renaming the ERE Output the ‘Core Research Output’, while Te Pūkenga suggested renaming it the ‘Nominated Research Output’. AUT and Canterbury suggested renaming the ERE component as the Research Excellence component.

In principle decision

Based on the recommendations of the SRG, the TEC has agreed in principle that the ERE Output term will be retained.

Section B: Other issues raised in sector feedback

55. The issues summarised in the table below have been raised in feedback. These issues either require a minor adjustment to the draft Guidelines, or will be addressed outside of the Guidelines.

<i>Issue</i>	<i>Raised by</i>	<i>Requires Guidelines adjustment</i>	<i>TEC action or note</i>
<i>Issues relating to staff eligibility and ARO framework</i>			
<i>Staff eligibility</i>			
In relation to the teaching substantiveness test, clarification is sought as to how TEOs should demonstrate in an auditable way that a staff member has contributed at least 25 percent to the delivery of a course, and equivalent working time to its design and assessment (the teaching substantiveness test). Clarification is also sought as to whether entirely online courses count for this purpose.	Canterbury	No	The teaching substantiveness test is unchanged from 2018 and the same provisions apply around demonstrating a 'major role in teaching'. The teaching substantiveness test does not distinguish between online or in-person delivery modes.
<i>Achievement Relative to Opportunity framework</i>			
Clarification required as to the penalty if a staff member is incorrectly assessed by a TEO as NER or part-time and consequently submits too few EREs.	AUT; Lincoln, Te Pūkenga; VUW	Yes	The TEO Guidelines have been updated to reflect that in such cases the EP would still be assessed based on the EREs submitted. Panel members would be alerted to the error. TEC will release an ERE calculator tool to support TEOs in determining the correct number of EREs to include in an EP based on ARO framework circumstances.
Section of TEO Guidelines 'EP submission options', on determining number of EREs to submit, is confusing and repetitive.	VUW	Yes	The final TEO Guidelines have been reviewed for clarity.

There is no field in the EP to record ARO framework circumstances. Staff members will want to be able to detail these in the Platform of Research – Contextual Summary if panel members cannot see this information.	Lincoln	No	The type of Researcher Circumstances and the total duration of time it affected the staff member is recorded in the EP and visible to panellists. As in 2018, panellists will also be able to see whether the staff member is NER and/or part-time.
<i>New and Emerging Researcher definition</i>			
Further guidance is sought on how TEOs can verify whether staff members met the definition of independent researchers when self-employed prior to commencing PBRF-eligible roles.	AUT; Massey; Te Pūkenga	Yes	The TEO Guidelines have been updated to clarify that TEOs are expected to use information contained in CVs, job descriptions, and employment contracts to determine whether staff members met the definition of independent researchers in previous roles. Where this information is not sufficient, interviews with staff members will provide further information.
Further guidance is sought on how TEOs can verify whether staff members who were formerly employed outside academia or overseas met the definition of independent researchers in those roles.	Canterbury	Yes	The TEO Guidelines have been updated to clarify that TEOs are expected to use information contained in CVs, job descriptions, and employment contracts to determine whether staff members met the definition of independent researchers in previous roles. Where this information is not sufficient, interviews with staff members will provide further information.
Clarification is sought as to whether staff who have not yet completed their PhDs but who meet the research substantiveness test should be considered NER.	Lincoln	Yes	Holding a PhD is not relevant to determining NER eligibility. The TEO Guidelines have been updated to make this clear and to provide a relevant staff example.

<p>The staff examples in the NER eligibility guidance are confusing as they focus on research activity rather than on being employed in a role requiring research. A broader range of examples is sought.</p>	<p>Te Pūkenga; VUW</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>The examples in the TEO Guidelines have been updated.</p>
<p>Clarification is sought as to what forms of CV are permissible as evidence for audit purposes.</p>	<p>Auckland</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>The draft Guidelines have been updated to clarify that there is no required format for a CV.</p>
<p>Clarification is sought as to whether the role of associate supervisor would meet the research substantiveness test.</p>	<p>Lincoln</p>	<p>No</p>	<p>The current description states:</p> <p><i>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.</i></p> <p>We consider this sufficiently clear. The Guidelines cannot cover every potential variation in TEO terminology</p>

<p>Clarification is sought as to whether being an independent researcher is now irrelevant for determining NER status.</p>	<p>VUW</p>	<p>No</p>	<p>The new NER definition states:</p> <p><i>New and Emerging Researchers are defined as staff members who meet the PBRF eligibility criteria at the census date, and first became independent researchers on or after the start of the assessment period on 1 January 2018.</i></p> <p><i>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 Aotearoa 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’.</i></p> <p>Meeting the definition of an independent researcher is central to determining NER eligibility.</p>
<p>The NER eligibility criteria should be included in the section on staff eligibility.</p>	<p>VUW</p>	<p>No</p>	<p>The decision to separate the NER eligibility from the staff eligibility section was made to signal more clearly that determining NER eligibility is separate from determining staff eligibility. New and Emerging status is now part of the ARO framework.</p>
<p><i>Part-time status under ARO framework</i></p>			

Clarification sought as to whether a staff member with two concurrent part-time contracts totalling 0.9FTE would be considered part-time for the purposes of determining EP submission requirements.	Auckland	Yes	<p>The TEO Guidelines have been updated to ensure it is clear the option to submit fewer than 3 EREs is only available to staff whose total FTE across the assessment period is 0.8 FTE or less.</p> <p>The TEO Guidelines have been updated to ensure it is clear that calculating FTE to decide staff members' PBRF eligibility is separate from calculating FTE for determining EP submission requirements.</p>
A staff member who is employed at less than 0.2 FTE at any one point during the eligibility period is ineligible for submission even if they average more than 0.2 FTE over the duration of the assessment period. This does not seem fair to that staff member.	Auckland	No	The PBRF eligibility criteria require that staff members must be employed for a minimum of 0.2 FTE over the duration of their employment. This requirement is unchanged from 2018. The 0.2 FTE minimum requirement for eligibility applies independently of the ARO framework part-time status requirements.
Clarification is sought as to whether the FTE of part-time staff will be stated in the EP.	Auckland; VUW	No	Staff declaring part-time status will select which of the two part-time categories they fall into: 0.2 FTE to 0.49 FTE, or 0.5 – 0.8 FTE. This information will be displayed in the EP.
<i>Researcher circumstances</i>			

The administrative workload of verifying Researcher Circumstances via interviews etc will be very large.	Te Pūkenga	No	Verification requirements for Researcher Circumstances have been reduced relative to the 2018 requirements for Extraordinary Circumstances. The majority of Researcher Circumstances (for example periods of leave, long-term illness, career breaks) can be verified via existing HR documentation without requiring interviews. Unlike with Extraordinary Circumstances in the previous round, TEOs only need to verify the type of circumstance and the period of impact.
Issues relating to EP design			
PBRF Definition of Research			
Insufficient guidance as to how the application of existing knowledge can meet the definition of research.	Lincoln	No	Officials consider the Definition is sufficiently clear. Peer review panellists will have the relevant expertise to apply it, including where appropriate in applied and practice-based research.
Cross-referral			
The draft Guidelines are unclear as to whether CRE items can be requested for cross-referral or form part of the rationale for requesting cross-referral.	VUW	Yes	Items from both the ERE and the CRE component can be cross-referred. The TEO and Assessment Guidelines have been reviewed to ensure consistency.
The information on how to request cross-referral to the Mātauranga Māori and/or Pacifici Research panels should be better aligned once the Panel-Specific Guidelines are published.	AUT	Yes	Officials will review to ensure consistency between the TEO Guidelines and the Panel-Specific Guidelines.

The Guidelines should include advice on the grounds for rejecting cross-referral to the Mātauranga Māori panel.	VUW	No	Information on this area is included in the draft Mātauranga Māori Panel-Specific Guidelines currently out for consultation.
<i>Examples of Research Excellence component</i>			
Concerns that the terminology used to describe the various parts of the component are not used consistently, particularly variation between how the 'Description' term is used between Research Outputs and Research Activities, and inconsistent use of 'outputs' versus 'research outputs', and 'activities' versus 'research-related activities'.	AUT; VUW	Yes	This has been updated for the final guidelines.
Guidance sought as to where in the ERE staff members should describe impact, what will count as evidence of impact, and where that evidence should be presented.	Auckland	Yes	While any impacts described in the ERE component must be able to be evidenced if requested by the auditors, there is no requirement that the evidence is provided in the EP. The final Guidelines have been reviewed to ensure the options for including impact in the ERE component are clear.
Guidance sought as to preferred practice where listing the authors of a research output will exceed the 2,000-character limit.	Otago	Yes	Some panels have specified preferences for this issue in their Panel-Specific Guidelines. The TEO Guidelines have been updated to provide standardised advice that applies in the absence of panel-specific preferences.
The guidance on Research Activities proscribes self-commentary on quality and significance in the Description field. However, if the activity is an impact one, then it is necessary to describe significance.	Massey	Yes	The guidance for completing the 'Description' field for Research Activities has been updated in the final TEO Guidelines.

Research Outputs			
Clarification is sought around the guidance for NER staff members who are submitting only one ERE: it is currently unclear whether they are advised to submit their PhD thesis as the ERE or not.	VUW	Yes	<p>This has been updated for the final guidelines.</p> <p>As set out in the TEO Guidelines, the expectation is that the PhD thesis should not be the first choice of output where a staff member has other quality assured outputs to submit.</p>
Guidance sought as to when a PhD is deemed to be publicly available.	Lincoln	Yes	<p>For all outputs, regardless of type, this is defined as the first date the output was made available in the public domain in its final form. The final TEO Guidelines have been updated to state that for PhD theses this is likely to be the date it was first accessible in a repository or library without any embargo.</p>
The 'Products and Processes' Research Output type description does not refer to pending patents.	AUT	Yes	<p>The description in the final TEO Guidelines has been updated to include pending patents.</p>
Clarification sought as to the minimum proportion of 'significant new research material' for research outputs which are based on previous outputs which fall outside the assessment period.	Auckland; Lincoln; Te Pūkenga; VUW; Waikato	Yes	<p>A case-by-case approach will be taken where outputs are flagged by panel members or auditors. Input will be sought from relevant panel Co-Chairs and/or the Moderators as required. Setting a fixed threshold is not appropriate given varying disciplinary norms.</p> <p>The final TEO Guidelines have been updated to ensure this is clear.</p>

The 'Software' Research Output type evidence requirements where the output is an ERE Output should be revised	Auckland	Yes	This has been updated in the final TEO Guidelines.
Where an ERE Output is a book, the TEO should be able to provide the assessable version as a physical copy.	Lincoln	No	Any ERE Output, regardless of type, can be submitted physically in cases where digital submission is not possible.
<i>Contributions to the Research Environment component</i>			
The overall guidance on the CRE component is limited and it is unclear what expectations are.	AUT	Yes	The CRE Component guidance has been updated for the final TEO Guidelines.
It is unclear what activities count as CRE items and what are Research Activities now that the eligible types have been split between the two categories. The distinction between prizes as CRE items or Research Activities is particularly confusing.	AUT; Unitec; VUW	Yes	The CRE Component guidance has been updated for the final TEO Guidelines. A table showing what types are now CREs and what are now Research Activities has been added.
CRE definitions are too broad, and it is unclear whether student supervision data is required.	Unitec	No	The CRE definitions have been retained. Student supervision data has not been specified as a requirement.
<i>Issues relating to the draft Assessment Guidelines</i>			
<i>Assessment processes</i>			

<p>Clarification sought as to whether Supplementary Items and OERs are assessed, and the distinction between assessing and examining EREs and ERE Outputs.</p> <p>AUT suggests that the panels calibration process could include the number of Supplementary Items within EREs.</p>	<p>AUT; Lincoln; VUW</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>As with NROs, OROs, and RCs in 2018, while only ERE Outputs are examined in detail, assessment is based on all items included in the ERE and CRE components.</p> <p>As in all previous rounds, if optional items are included they will be taken into consideration as part of the assessment, but their absence will not form the basis of quality judgements.</p> <p>Variation in the number of Supplementary Items will be considered in analysis supporting the panel process.</p>
<p>The section on assessing the ERE component should be revised to reflect the inclusion of Research Activities.</p>	<p>VUW</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>This has been updated for the final guidelines.</p>
<p>The Guidelines do not reflect best practice for managing panel member bias, nor do they provide any detail on panel training, in particular training on assessing quality rather than quantity.</p>	<p>Auckland; Canterbury; Massey</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>The Assessment Guidelines do not include information on panel training.</p> <p>The TEC will ensure the sector has appropriate information about panel training, which will take place in 2026.</p>
<p>Holistic assessment guidance does not accurately reflect the process.</p>	<p>VUW</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>This section has been updated for the final Guidelines.</p> <p>The Assessment Guidelines do not include some technical elements of the process that are not relevant to panel members or submitting staff members.</p>
<p>Assessment criteria</p>			

The tie-point descriptor language is too loose and should be more active/directive.	VUW	Yes	A statement has been added setting out that this more permissive language is deliberate. This reflects the revised definitions of research and research excellence and the expectation that an EP component does not have to achieve all possible aspects/levels described in the tie-point descriptor in order to be awarded that score.
The Quality Category A descriptor refers to contributions 'beyond the field of research'. It is unclear whether this means within the academy or impact outside the academy.	VUW	Yes	The definition of research excellence and impact is explicit that impact is excluded from the research environment. The wording around interpreting the Quality Category descriptors has been updated for clarity.
<i>Issues relating to the presentation of the Guidelines</i>			
<i>General presentation</i>			
High-level summaries and action points at the start of each chapter or section will aid staff using the Guidelines	Auckland; VUW	Yes	The final guidelines have been reviewed for clarity.
Significant changes from 2018 should be signalled clearly in the Guidelines.	VUW	Yes	The final guidelines have been reviewed for clarity.
It is unnecessary to refer to changes from 2018 and/or their rationale and doing so dilutes the focus on the guidance itself.	Massey; VUW; Waikato	Yes	The final guidelines have been reviewed for clarity.
The language throughout is vague and overly complex. The use of double negatives in particular is deplored.	Auckland	Yes	The final guidelines have been reviewed for clarity.

The use of sidebars/call-out text boxes is unclear and inconsistent	Auckland; Te Pūkenga, VUW	Yes	The use of sidebars in the final TEO Guidelines has been updated.
The document is too long/too repetitive/too complicated	Canterbury; Te Pūkenga; TEU	No	The final TEO Guidelines have been reviewed for clarity.
The use of 'traditional' and 'non-traditional' research terminology is problematic.	Massey	No	These terms have been retained. The TEC and SRG has considered this issue previously and have been unable to find a suitable alternative which would be readily understood and neutral.
<i>TEO Guidelines</i>			
The organisation of the ERE and CRE sections is counterintuitive.	VUW	No	These sections have been reviewed for clarity but the overall structure has not been changed.
The process diagram on page 12 (providing an overview of the process) should include page numbers.	Canterbury	Yes	This has been updated for the final TEO Guidelines.
The diagram of the EP structure on page 54 does not include Supplementary Items or the ERE narrative	Auckland; Canterbury	Yes	This diagram gives a high-level view of the EP. An additional diagram will be included in the final TEO Guidelines.
<i>Assessment Guidelines</i>			
There is a process diagram missing at the end of the chapter 'What are the stages of the assessment process'.	TEU	Yes	This has been updated for the final Assessment Guidelines.

