PBRF 2006 Results: How Did the NACCQ Sector fare?

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Abstract

The recent release of the 2006 Performance Based Research Fund (PBRF) results represents the second time the PBRF assessment has been conducted in New Zealand, with the normal period between rounds planned for every six years. The first assessment took place in 2003, a round in which most ITP's (except Wintec and Unitec) decided not to participate, given the decided skew of the exercise towards the established research intensive universities with medical schools. This intermediate round was intended to enable institutions to address any anomalies and issues identified in the first round. For institutions newer to the research endeavour it also offered an opportunity for emerging researchers to be submitted for assessment. In the 2006 round a further eight ITP's participated, aiming to win back at least some proportion of the funds lost to their institutions, although some still boycotted the exercise.

Keywords: PBRF, quality assured.

1 Introduction

The attached analysis compares NACCQ sector performance in the exercise, against 1) other institutions in the Computer Science, Information Technology and Information Science subject area; 2) other subject areas in the ITP sector; 3) the 2003 NACCQ sector participants and their 2006 results.

2 Computer Science, Information Technology and Information Science subject area

Of the 425.32 eligible researchers 172.79 (*40.63%*) were NACCQ sector members (including AUT) or 144.79 (*34.04%*) (excluding AUT), so the NACCQ sector is a sizable proportion of New Zealand's researchers in the field. Some ITP's (such as UCOL who chose not to enter the PBRF exercise) are also excluded from these figures.

The NACCQ sector proportions, as expected, reduce when considering researchers who were assigned a 'funded quality category'. However, as the TEC reports concerning the assignment of an unfunded 'R' category to

a researcher, "such a quality category does not mean that the staff member in question has produced no research outputs during the period or that none of the outputs produced are of a sound (or even very good) quality. Rather it simply means that they did not meet the standards required for the award of a quality funded category" (TEC, 2007, p. 21).

Of the 139.15 rated 'R' or not 'quality funded' researchers 29.86 (*21.46%*) were in the University sector, 8 (*5.75%*) of these were at AUT. Of the overall number 117.29 (*84.29%*) were NACCQ sector members (including AUT, and the category noted as other (<5 FTE) which includes Wananga & PTE's) or 100.54 (*72.25%*) (excluding AUT), so the NACCQ sector has still some way to go to generate more 'quality funded' or 'active' researchers in the field.

However, of the 286.17 active or 'quality funded' researchers 55.5 (*19.39%*) were NACCQ sector members (including AUT) or 34.5 (*12.06%*) (excluding AUT), so the NACCQ sector also emerges as a significant proportion of New Zealand's 'active' researchers in the field.

3 NACCQ versus other Subject Areas in the ITP sector

In the ITP sector Computer Science, Information Technology and Information Science ranked third as a subject area for proportion of 'research active' staff. However Communications, Media and Journalism who ranked second had a small number of researchers, and the visual arts and crafts area who ranked first includes many part time practitioners who are exhibiting their work regularly on a commercial basis – where exhibiting creative works is now recognised as 'research' in that field. When considering the number of 'active' researchers in the sector NACCQ ranks second, and along with Visual Arts and Crafts, Engineering & Technology, Management HR & Business and Education is one of the small group of disciplines within the ITP sector to demonstrate a critical mass of 'active' researchers in the field. It is also noteworthy that the NACCQ sector, when considering the proportion of active researchers, outranks the nursing discipline across all sectors, and is not far behind education across all sectors. Considering the similarities in the practice focus of these disciplines, it suggests that NACCQ members have done well by comparison in converting their activities into research.

4   NACCQ sector participants 2006 versus 2003 results

The three participants in the inaugural 2003 PBRF round were AUT, Unitec and Wintec, who between them generated 24 'research active' staff members, with 86 staff participating at an average of *27.91%* active. Only AUT had any A & B graded researchers. In 2006 a lesser number of 72.8 staff participated, suggesting that the institutions had become more discriminating in determining eligible staff. These generated 38 'research active' staff, at an average of *52.2%* active. Both AUT and Unitec now feature with B graded staff, with both institutions having made sizable gains. At 58.33% the increase in the percentage of research active staff over the three year period is creditable, and shows that emergent research institutions can notably progress through the system. The challenge for the NACCQ sector now is over the next six years to ensure that its members can cross the threshold for the 'C' funded category, or 'C (NE)' (new and emerging) where solely research outputs (rather than peer esteem and contribution to the research environment) are taken into consideration. The step from a 'C' to a 'B' score is a rather large one, but nonetheless within the reach of some researchers in the sector.

5   Conclusion

Overall NACCQ sector members should be proud of their efforts. Our sizable pool of researchers in the New Zealand Computer Science, Information Technology and Information Science subject area have now been officially identified and ranked. The positives of the exercise are best concentrated on, and members should note that the sector has outperformed many others, and there is scope for continuing improvement as shown by those institutions who have participated in both rounds to date. This is a credit to our sustained, joint and collegial efforts. Long may they continue!

6   References

TEC. (2007). PBRF Quality Evaluation 2006: Release Summary. Wellington: Tertiary Education Commission.