

# Journalism research and ERA: Observations from New Zealand's experience with the PBRF

## Abstract

Australian journalism academics are preparing themselves for the first round of the Excellence in Research for Australia regime. The majority of journalism programs in New Zealand have already taken part in two rounds of the similar Performance-Based Research Fund (PBRF) system and are preparing for the next, to be held in 2012. This paper discusses the New Zealand system, making observations for the assistance of Australian journalism academics, including the impact of the PBRF on funding and research, journalism's performance in the PBRF, the status of practice-based research, and various strategies researchers can use to maximise their performance.

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## Dr Grant Hannis

Head of Journalism Programme,  
Dept of Communication, Journalism and Marketing,  
Massey University, New Zealand

## Introduction

As Australian journalism academics prepare for the first round of the Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA) process, they are all too aware of the many challenges this regime presents. The recent downgrading of a leading Australian journalism academic journal, the status of journalism as research, the impact ERA will have on journalism departments, and the relatively poor performance of journalism in the 2009 trial of the system are just some of the topics currently occupying the minds of journalism scholars throughout Australia (Anonymous, 2010a; Knight, 2010).

Australian academics will need to find Australian solutions to such challenges, and the recent establishment of professorial council to advocate on behalf of journalism seems a wise move (Anonymous, 2010b). However, experience is a great teacher and there many lessons Australian journalism academics may wish to consider in light of New Zealand's recent experience with its research-evaluation regime, the Performance-Based Research Fund (PBRF). Administered by government agency the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC), the PBRF involves an assessment of the quality of research activity undertaken in participating tertiary educational institutions. The PBRF guides the allocation of millions of dollars in government research funding each year.

The number of journalism programs involved in the PBRF has increased over time. In the first quality evaluation, held in 2003, four of the 10 journalism programs participated—the three university-based programs (AUT University, Massey University, and University of Canterbury) and one polytechnic program (Waikato Institute of Technology). In the second round, held in 2006, two further journalism programs participated (Christchurch Polytechnic Institute of Technology and Whitireia Community Polytechnic). But journalism did not perform well in either PBRF round (TEC, 2004; TEC, 2007a), and New Zealand journalism academics are currently addressing the implications of this in the lead up to the next PBRF quality-evaluation round, to be held in 2012.

In light of New Zealand's experience, this paper makes observations pertinent to the Australian situation. The paper begins by describing the PBRF system, the recent performance of journalism programs, and the

impact of PBRF on institutions. This is followed by a discussion of the status of published journalism as research, and suggestions on how journalism researchers can enhance their grades. The paper concludes with some parting comments. All dollar figures quoted are New Zealand dollars.

### The PBRF

*Observation #1: It is likely ERA will eventually dictate how research in Australian universities is funded.*

The objectives of ERA in assessing research are fivefold: to establish an evaluation regime, provide a national stock-take, identify excellence, identify emerging areas, and allow comparisons in research (Australian Research Council, 2009a). The objectives of ERA make no mention of ERA directing funding of research. By contrast, the PBRF in New Zealand does guide governmental funding of tertiary institutions' research. The main objective of the PBRF is "to ensure excellent research in the tertiary education sector is encouraged and rewarded" (TEC, 2009, p. 3, emphasis added). In this, the PBRF reflects an international trend of using measures of the quality of research to guide governmental research funding, most obviously the long-established Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) in the United Kingdom. Although ERA is not explicitly linked to funding, the clear similarities between ERA on the one hand and the RAE and PBRF on the other suggest it is only a matter of time before ERA also directs funding. Indeed, it is already known that from 2012 ERA will inform the performance component of Australian government's sustainable research excellence program, and institutions will only be able to access funding from the program if they participate in ERA (Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research, 2010).

In New Zealand, the TEC allocates PBRF funds to each institution on the basis of three criteria (the percentage share of the total funding is in brackets):

- Quality evaluation: the assessed quality of the institution's research (60 per cent)

- Research degree completions: the number of postgraduate students completing their studies (25 per cent)
- External research income: the dollar amount of research funds the institution has obtained from other sources (15 per cent).

Participating institutions must participate on all three measures (TEC, 2005). PBRF funding is allocated to each institution annually, with the TEC collecting data on each institution's research degree completions and external research income each year. As the quality-evaluation criterion requires every PBRF-eligible staff member submit an evidence portfolio, assessed by panels of national and international experts (TEC, 2005), data for this measure are collected less frequently: 2003, 2006, and again in 2012.

The funding available through the PBRF is significant. Table 1 gives the indicative 2009 PBRF funding for the six institutions that offer journalism programs (these figures are, of course, the total funding each institution receives, not merely the funding journalism attracts). Massey received \$35 million in PBRF funding, of which \$21 million was from the quality evaluation, placing it first among the institutions offering journalism. Canterbury was the second-ranked institution and AUT University the third. Together, the six institutions offering journalism received 28 per cent of all the PBRF funds, the quality-evaluation portion amounting to \$41 million.

Of the approximately \$240 million allocated under the PBRF to the 27 participating institutions, the largest individual shares went to the University of Auckland and the University of Otago—together receiving half of the money. Massey was third and Canterbury fourth, accounting for a further quarter of the funds allocated. For the period 2007-2012 the PBRF will allocate an estimated \$1.5 billion to all 27 institutions (TEC, 2007a).

The rewards from doing well in the PBRF are not solely financial. Auckland and Otago have both used their high performance in the PBRF for promotional purposes (see, for instance, University of Auckland, 2010).

Table 1: 2009 indicative PBRF funding, selected institutions.						
Ranking out of all 27 institutions	Institution	PBRF funds (\$m)	Share of total PBRF funds (%)	Sources of PBRF funds (\$m)		
				Quality evaluation	Research degree completions	External research income
3	Massey	35.1	14.72%	20.8	9.7	4.6
4	Canterbury	24.8	10.39%	15.2	7.2	2.4
8	AUT	6.7	2.79%	3.9	2.0	0.8
11	Wintec	0.6	0.23%	0.3	0.2	0.0
13	CPIT	0.4	0.18%	0.4	0.0	0.1
21	Whitireia	0.1	0.03%	0.1	0.0	0.0
n.a.	All 6 institutions offering journalism	67.6	28.34%	40.69	19.08	7.86
n.a.	All 27 institutions	238.7	100.00%	143.2	59.7	35.8

Source: TEC (2009)

*Observation #2: Research outputs and activity carry the greatest weight in the PBRF and so are likely to do so in ERA.*

Four overall indicators of research performance will be assessed in ERA: research quality, research volume and activity, research application, and research recognition (Australian Research Council, 2009a). These are largely the same measures as those used by the PBRF. However, whereas ERA does

not ascribe specific weights to each measure, the PBRF effectively does, and gives the greatest weight to the quality of research output. The 2006 PBRF quality evaluation continues to play a significant role in the allocation of research funding in New Zealand, as it carries a 60 per cent weight in determining how PBRF funds are allocated each year. In turn, the quality-evaluation criterion involves assessing each institution's PBRF-eligible staff members on three measures, the TEC having given indicative weightings for each (noted in brackets below) (TEC, 2005):

- Research outputs: including peer-reviewed journal articles and conference papers (70 per cent).
- Peer esteem: including favourable reviews of work and service on editorial boards (15 per cent)
- Contribution to research environment: including helping to establish and maintain research networks, and generating external research funding (15 per cent)

### Performance of journalism in the PBRF

*Observation #3: Journalism has performed relatively poorly in the PBRF, which may indicate journalism programs will perform similarly in ERA.*

In Australia, journalism did not perform well in the 2009 ERA trial. Journalism and Professional Writing received the second lowest ERA ranking in its cluster, Studies in Creative Arts and Writing, measured in terms of both maximum performance and average performance. Across all the Humanities and Creative Arts clusters, Journalism and Professional Writing was one of only a few disciplines to be ranked below the world average (Australian Research Council, 2009b). Once journalism is measured against all subject areas in ERA, its performance may be worse. Certainly in the PBRF in New Zealand journalism has been measured against all disciplines, and has not performed well.

The TEC only publishes aggregate information for institutions and subject areas, in the form of numerical scores. The highest possible quality score an institution or subject areas can obtain is 10. However, this is effectively impossible to attain as it would imply all the institution's staff were world class. In fact, the average score for the institutions that participated in the

2006 round was 2.96. All scores are quoted for fulltime equivalent (FTE) staff (TEC, 2007a).

Thirty-one tertiary education institutions took part in the 2006 round and the TEC disaggregated the research conducted into 42 subject areas (TEC, 2007a). We cannot assess the 2006 quality evaluation of journalism alone, as the TEC did not publish data to that level of detail. But we can obtain a reasonably good idea of the situation using the data the TEC did publish, which covers the subject area Communications, Journalism and Media Studies (CJMS).

Table 2 presents the results. The top ranked subject area was Philosophy, with a quality score of 5.15, followed by Earth Sciences, Biomedical, and Physics. At the other end of the scale, the lowest scores were earned by Nursing, 0.49, followed by Design and Education. CJMS also performed relatively poorly: its quality score was 1.99, ranking it 35 out of the 42 subject areas.

Ranking	Subject area (PBRF-eligible, FTE staff)	Quality score
1	Philosophy (68)	5.15
2	Earth Sciences (137)	4.77
3=	Biomedical (222)	4.65
3=	Physics (106)	4.65
<b>35</b>	<b>Communications, Journalism &amp; Media Studies (132)</b>	1.99
40	Education (978)	1.31
41	Design (83)	1.27

42	Nursing (243)	0.49
n.a.	Average for Humanities and Social Sciences (1477)	3.46
n.a.	Average for PBRF (8077)	2.96
Sources: (TEC, 2007b), Çinlar & Dowse (2008)		

These results largely mirror the 2003 round, where CJMS had a quality rating of 1.59 and was again ranked 35th. The lowest ratings in 2003 were earned by Nursing, Design and Education, and the highest rankings went to Philosophy, Anthropology and Earth Sciences (TEC, 2004).

Such results reflect one of the most significant characteristics of the PBRF: the quality evaluation saw the relative success of well-established, research-oriented academic disciplines, such as the sciences, and relatively poor performances by more practice-based disciplines. Indeed, the panel that assessed the CJMS evidence portfolios in the 2006 round noted that the subject area's relatively low score "reflects the more recent development of this field of research, the number of emerging researchers, and the 'practitioner' nature of some disciplines within the subject area" (Social Sciences and Other Cultural/Social Studies Panel, 2007, p. 18).

CJMS's relative poor performance is even more marked if we consider its performance relative to similar disciplines (again, Table 2). In a recent assessment of the PBRF, CJMS was regarded as being a member of the Humanities and Social Sciences (HSS) grouping (Çinlar & Dowse, 2008). Other subjects in HSS included Anthropology and Archaeology; English Language and Literature; Political Science, International Relations and Public Policy; and Philosophy. The average quality score for the HSS category was 3.46, notably higher than the 2.96 average for the whole PBRF. Çinlar & Dowse concluded:

Communications, Journalism and Media Studies comprises a relatively new area of study compared with the other subjects in this grouping, may include substantial interdisciplinary work, and has a

strong presence in the ITPs [institutes of technology and polytechnics]. Many TEOs [tertiary education organisations] established departments covering these subjects only in the past decade. As a young subject, it is likely to have greater difficulty demonstrating peer esteem because there are fewer journals of longstanding leadership in the field and fewer long-established senior researchers to guide and evaluate work in the subject (Çinlar & Dowse, 2008, p. 52).

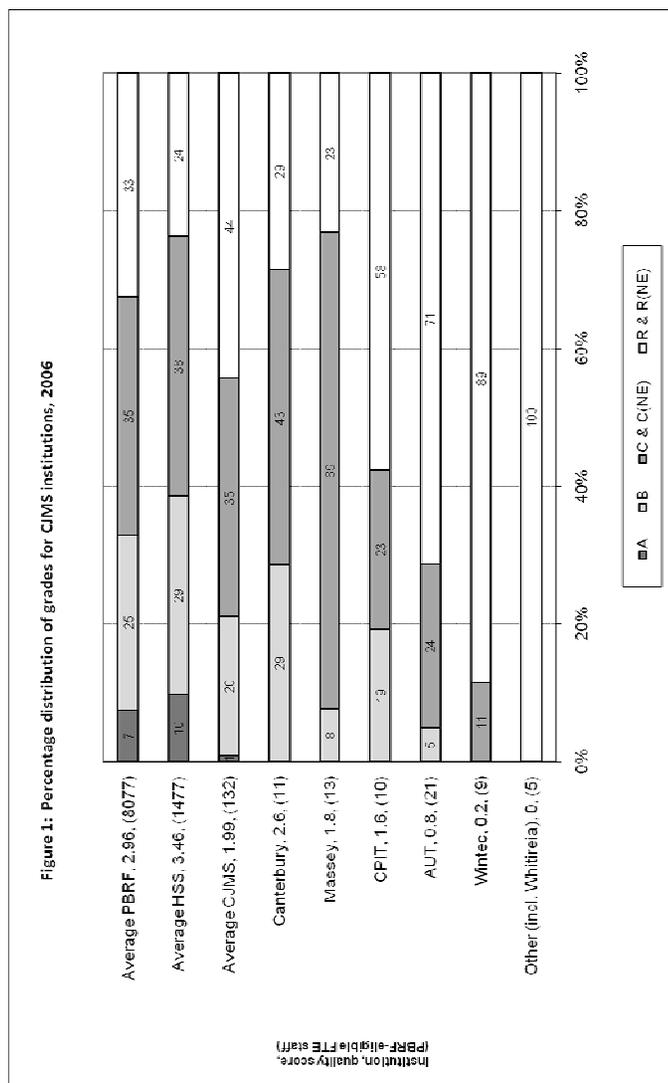
It is true that New Zealand journalism has long been based primarily at polytechnics, with the universities only taking a major role in the sector in recent years. However, to the extent Australian journalism researchers have also had strong professional—rather than an academic—backgrounds, the performance of Australian journalism research in ERA will likely mirror that of their New Zealand counterparts.

Under the PBRF, each staff member's evidence portfolio is graded A (world class), B (very good), C (good), C(NE) (good, new and emerging researcher), R or R(NE) (R researchers are below the C grade). Individual grades are made available to each individual and their institution. The higher the grade the more funding is allocated, although R and R(NE) attract no funding. The reason for CJMS's relatively low performance can be clearly understood by examining the relative distribution of staff members' grades (Figure 1). Across all 31 institutions that took part in the 2006 PBRF round, seven per cent of staff were graded A, a quarter B, just over a third C or C(NE), and the remaining third R. This produced the average quality score of 2.96. For the HSS grouping, the proportions of As, Bs and Cs were slightly higher, and the Rs consequently lower, leading to an average quality score of 3.46. By contrast, looking at institutions that offered CJMS, the percentage of As dropped to one per cent, the Bs to 20 per cent, just over a third were C, and about 45 per cent of the staff were R. The quality score for CJMS institutions was therefore 1.99. That is to say, CJMS's relatively low proportion of A and B researchers and relatively high proportion of R researchers meant CJMS's quality rating was notably lower than that for the HSS category and the total PBRF.

Zeroing in on the six institutions that teach journalism (again, Figure 1), no staff were rated A. Nevertheless, the relatively high percentages of Bs and Cs

at Canterbury meant its quality score, 2.6, approached that of the 2.96 for all institutions but well short of the 3.46 score for the HSS grouping (the TEC only reports individual institution's quality ratings to one decimal place). The relatively high proportion of Cs at Massey and the Rs at Christchurch Polytechnic Institute of Technology resulted in those institutions' lower quality scores of 1.8 and 1.6 respectively. The relatively very high proportions of Rs at both AUT and Waikato Institute of Technology led to those organisations' quality scores of 0.8 and 0.2. Whitireia was included in the Other category, where all staff were graded R and the quality score was 0.

It should be noted that these were the results of the 2006 round, some four years ago. No inference should be drawn from these results regarding the quality of research undertaken in those institutions today. Indeed, significant changes have occurred in at least some of these institutions (discussed below), which could lead to significant changes in the institutions' performance in the



2012 round. Further, remember the results cover those researchers involved in communications and media studies, not solely journalism.

## Impact of the PBRF

*Observation #4: The PBRF has seen an increase in research outputs and research activity in New Zealand, at the expense of teaching. The same is likely to happen in Australia in response to ERA.*

There is evidence to suggest that the PBRF has led to a rise in research outputs and research productivity at tertiary institutions in New Zealand. Smart (2009) considered the amount of research, in the form of journal articles and reviews listed in online database Web of Science, produced by staff at New Zealand universities during the period PBRF was introduced. He noted a sharp increase in both the amount of research and the productivity of researchers (as measured by research per FTE research staff) following the introduction of the PBRF in 2003 (Figure 2).

After a modest increase at the start of the period followed by a period of relatively stable output between 1999 and 2002, the amount of research increased by 35 per cent between 2002 and 2006. Likewise, after an early modest increase in research productivity between 1997 and 2000, and a decline between 2000 and 2003, research productivity increased by a striking 21 per cent between 2003 and 2006. Smart acknowledged that such an increase in research may have been at the expense of other university activity, such as teaching and service.

Certainly a survey of Victoria University staff following the 2003 round found staff generally regarded the PBRF has having devalued teaching in favour of research (Hall & Morris Matthews, 2006, p. 472). Between the first and second rounds it appears that, in order to improve their performance in the PBRF, institutions hired research-active staff and reassigned research-inactive staff to remove them from consideration in the PBRF (TEC, 2007b).

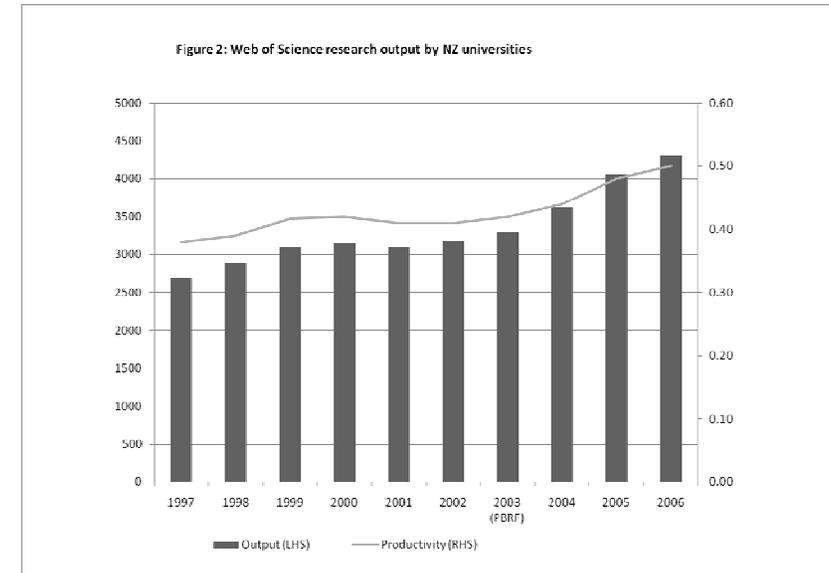
Likewise, there has been an increasing emphasis on research in journalism faculties, at least among the universities. Research-active staff have been hired, existing staff encouraged to obtain research qualifications, and research-inactive tutors used more for teaching (Hannis, 2007). Some of the biggest changes have occurred at Massey University and AUT University, which both had to contend not only with the PBRF but also their near concurrent conversion from polytechnics to universities (Massey in 1999 and

AUT University in 2000). For instance, the AUT University journalism program has moved from having no doctoral-qualified staff to having three, and has established the Pacific Media Centre research centre, which among other activities publishes *Pacific Journalism Review*, New Zealand's only academic journalism journal. Likewise, Massey now has one doctoral qualified staff member and is involved with the work of the Pacific Media Centre.

### Is published journalism quality research for PBRF purposes?

*Observation #5: The status of published journalism as quality research will remain as vexed as ever.*

In the debates over the design of ERA, Australian journalism academics have argued published journalism can be regarded as research and that journalism be treated as “creative works” (Journalism Education Association of Australia, 2009; Pearson, 2009; Australian Research Council, 2009c). But policymaking for the ERA appears to be based on conventional notions of research, with the Australian Research Council undertaking a lengthy process of ranking about 21,000 academic journals to assist in the grading of researchers' outputs (Australian Research Council, 2010). Further, the hypothetical example of a non-traditional research output used in the ERA guidelines, a series of paintings, considers the significance of the paintings' research component by emphasising international publication of the works in academic circles (Australian Research Council, 2009a).



The debate over academic research versus practice-based research has taken place in New Zealand too. As one (apparent) member of the journalism education sector in New Zealand has declared:

Journalism needs in some cases to be considered as research and steps should be taken to make journalism a more formal part of the PBRF framework (Summary of Sector Responses to the Professional and Applied Research Consultation Paper, 2009, p. 18).

Yet, to the extent practice-based creative research has been included in the PBRF, it has not performed well, with the creative disciplines generally receiving relatively low rankings in the 2006 PBRF round (TEC, 2007b). Of the four subject covered by the Creative and Performing Arts assessment panel, three appeared among the bottom seven subject areas: Design (1.27); Theatre and Dance, Film, Television and Multimedia (1.82); and Visual Arts and Crafts (1.92). The fourth appeared in the middle of the rankings: Music, Literary Arts and Other Arts (3.34). The Creative and Performing Arts assessment panel explained that Design was rated particularly low because

“some excellent work in design seems better regarded as exemplary professional practice rather than research” and that Music, Literary Arts and Other Arts outperformed the other subject areas because Music, Literary Arts and Other Arts are “more established...in the New Zealand university environment” (Creative and Performing Arts Panel, 2007, p. 11). Again, it is clear that conventional academic research performance was the benchmark used.

This seeming advantage conventional academic research disciplines have over practitioner-based subjects in the PBRF has been well canvassed. The TEC recently commissioned an independent review of the PBRF, which included a survey of all the institutions participating in the system (Adams, 2008). Adams found the institutions generally supported the PBRF, but a common complaint was that the process disadvantages practitioner-based disciplines, such as in the creative arts. As a creative arts focus group commented, “well-known architects are unrated but they’re up to date in professional practice” (Adams, 2008, p. 49). The assessment panels, which typically emphasise quality research as being journal articles published internationally, were seen as part of the problem (Adams, 2008). Certainly, the panels have typically been drawn from the ranks of academia, including overseas academics (TEC, 2007b).

Another recent review of the PBRF, conducted by the Performance-Based Research Fund Sector Reference Group, reached similar conclusions, noting that “the perceptions that the needs of industry or professional groups are not being considered need to be addressed” (Performance-Based Research Fund Sector Reference Group, 2008, p. 12). The Sector Reference Group suggested expert reviewers be used by panels to assess the wider impact of research (such as on end users). This review also suggested “that panel chairs be instructed to consider whether some panel members should be appointed from outside academia to provide informed comment on the practical impact of applied research” (Performance-Based Research Fund Sector Reference Group, 2008, p. 18).

The composition of the PBRF assessment panels sounds very similar to the intended composition of ERA’s research evaluation committees:

“experienced, internationally-recognised experts” (Australian Research Council, 2009a, p. 7). This suggests that, in the absence among their members of strong advocates for practice-based research, ERA research evaluation committees will also favour conventional academic research.

What the situation will be for the 2012 PBRF round in New Zealand remains to be seen. Certainly, the New Zealand government may be considering amending the PBRF’s focus on international academic research. In its recently released strategy for the tertiary education sector, the Ministry of Education declared that the impact of research on firms needed greater recognition in the PBRF:

Research in universities needs to combine excellence with impact. In particular, we will ensure that the Performance-Based Research Fund recognises research of direct relevance to the needs of firms and its dissemination to them (Ministry of Education, 2010, p. 16)

### **Maximising researchers’ grades**

*Observation #6: There are many strategies researchers can adopt to maximise their ranking in regimes such as ERA and the PBRF.*

This section of the paper suggests various methods by which researchers can help maximise their grades. It is based on the systems as they currently exist, so these suggestions should be considered in light of any future revisions to the quality-evaluation processes.

*Use time wisely:* Increasingly researchers must consider what activities will count towards the research-quality evaluation and focus on performing those tasks. Inevitably, for instance, purely administrative and teaching roles will become a lesser priority. It is also likely researchers will engage less in local, applied research, in preference to producing international research outputs, especially journal articles (Boston, Mischewski & Smyth, 2005).

*Collect and assess material on an ongoing basis:* Under the evaluation regimes researchers are expected to have evidence of such research activity as published research outputs, invitations to speak at conferences, honours

and awards, etc. It is far preferable to collect and file this material on an ongoing basis rather than attempt to collect it retrospectively as the evaluation round deadline approaches. Ongoing collection will be less stressful and will make it less likely material will be forgotten. Some institutions—such as Victoria University of Wellington—have had mock PBRF rounds, which encourage staff to collect material contemporaneously with publication. The Journalism Education Association of Australia may wish to establish a similar process, to assist its members. Institutions' mock rounds have not been without controversy, however, with some institutions accused of using them for staff performance appraisal purposes (Tertiary Education Union, 2009).

*Produce:* It is important that research activity be output-focussed. That is, rather than consuming large amounts of time conducting research, significant effort must be put into writing and publishing the research. Indeed, the lead time between completing research and its publication can be lengthy. The period between submitting an article to an international journal and its eventual publication in the journal, for instance, can be a year or more.

Building a platform of research is also important. That is, research outputs should focus on a particular area and constitute a cohesive body of work. This is a more efficient way to conduct research, as a researcher's subsequent work can build on their previous work. It also helps a researcher build a reputation in an area, leading hopefully to opportunities for research collaboration and greater peer esteem.

*Ensure research has high impact:* It is important that research is noticed by other researchers. This will increase its impact, an important criterion in the quality evaluation. To identify the best journals in which to publish, journal databases, such as Web of Science, can be searched to identify journals that focus on particular topics. Articles published in such journals are likely to be read by others working in the area and subsequently cited in their research. The keywords for the research are also important. Make sure the article title specifically details the content of the article and is not obscure—otherwise it may not come up in database searches conducted by other researchers. Use broad terms and synonyms, to maximise the chances others will input at least one of these words in their searches. The work should also be promoted, such

as by posting it on the researcher's webpage and in their host institution's digital repository. The researcher can also issue media releases on their work.

*Ensure documentation is well presented:* Some of the documentation submitted in the ERA trial was poorly proofed, with information incomplete, duplicated or clearly wrong (Visher, 2010). Similar problems arose in the first PBRF round, but had been remedied by the second round. The TEC commented that this improvement may have led to increases in quality ratings as it ensured researchers' evidence was complete and accurate (TEC, 2007a).

Indeed, each portfolio of evidence only has a relatively short time to make its case, and so must present the researcher in the clearest, most complete way possible. In the 2006 PBRF round, for instance, the 20-person Social Sciences and Other Cultural/Social Studies Panel, whose assessment responsibilities included journalism research, looked at 468 evidence portfolios. A month before the panel met, each panel member looked in detail at an average of 55 evidence portfolios. This was followed by a three-day meeting of the entire panel to discuss all the evidence portfolios and effectively finalise the evaluations (Social Sciences and Other Cultural/Social Studies Panel, 2007). The documentation must therefore be clear, concise, self-explanatory, and contain no obvious errors (spelling mistakes, inconsistencies, etc.). It should not obscure the researcher's best work among poorer material, so should only include quality-assured material.

*Consider all measures of performance:* The focus of much of the discussion regarding the PBRF has often been on the publication of research, the highest weighted criterion, but this ignored the full picture—peer esteem and contribution to research environment were also important. Likewise, with ERA, it is important to consider all indicators of research performance.

Regarding peer esteem, for instance, it is potentially valuable for a researcher to actively seek out opportunities to enhance their level of recognition among their peers. The researcher should make themselves available for expert academic panels and apply for research prizes. To assist in this regard, the Journalism Education Association of Australia may wish to consider establishing prizes for the best research presented at its annual conference (established-researcher and junior/student-researcher categories, say). The

prizes need be no more expensive than certificates, with the winners judged by the association's executive, referees, or delegates.

*Lobby the host institution for support:* It is incumbent on those institutions that choose to take part in the evaluations to support their staff through the process. Staff should demand such support. Institutions need to ensure their internal processes are adequately resourced and well managed. For instance, staff must be properly trained in preparing the relevant documentation, systems should be in place to ensure staff can collate and prepare their evidence as they go, and staff should receive research mentoring. Staff will also need the time to conduct research—such as obtaining research leave, marking and teaching buyout, support to complete higher degrees, etc.

Institutions must also structure staff workloads to allow time for academics to undertake research, attend conferences, and make contacts in the national and international research community. This may include hiring tutors to take the main role in teaching on journalism programs.

### Concluding comments

As Australian journalism academics prepare for the first ERA round, this paper has noted several observations they may find of value in light of New Zealand's experience with the PBRF. Although this paper has argued that published journalism will probably not fare well in ERA, at least in the initial rounds, many of the journalistic skills journalism academics possess will serve them well longer term. Undertaking primary and secondary research, conducting interviews, networking, working collaboratively, managing time effectively, writing and publishing—these are all core journalistic skills that can be drawn on to develop journalism as an academic research discipline.

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