

To	Academic Board	From	Marcus Williams, Director, Research and Enterprise
Title	Quality assured ¹ (QA) research outputs targets	Date	2019/11/27

Recommendation

That the Committee approve the retention of the original Quality Assured Research Outputs target until the end of 2020 and then review it, ascertaining if the progression out of the post PBRF “slump” period, along with increased investment in research dissemination can arrest the decline.

Purpose

In the November meeting of the Academic Board (AB), the Director, Research and Enterprise presented a memo to the board for approval of the research goals for 2020. The AB approved the research goals for 2020 but asked for more information on the QA research outputs goal, identifying the gap between this goal and the outputs achieved in the last three years.

Background

Quality assured research outputs are research publications and creative outputs that have been through a peer-reviewed process or have been specifically commissioned. This is one of the key performance indicators Unitec agreed with TEC via our investment plan and every year the progress against this KPI is reported in the Unitec Annual Report. This KPI is measured as the total number of quality assured research outputs in a year per research active FTE.

Below are the year-to-date figures/goals for the quality assured research outputs KPI.

Research Goals	Actuals				Goals		
	2016	2017	2018	2019 (YTD)	2018	2019	2020
Quality Assured Research Outputs per FTE ²	3.05	3.03	1.84	1.33	2.41	2.46	2.51

Figure 1 below illustrates the actual number of quality assured research outputs per FTE over the last couple of years along with the targets.

¹ Quality assurance means that the research output has undergone a peer review process before publication and assures the consumer of the research of its veracity.

² Number of quality assured research outputs per FTE for academic staff teaching in degree programmes.

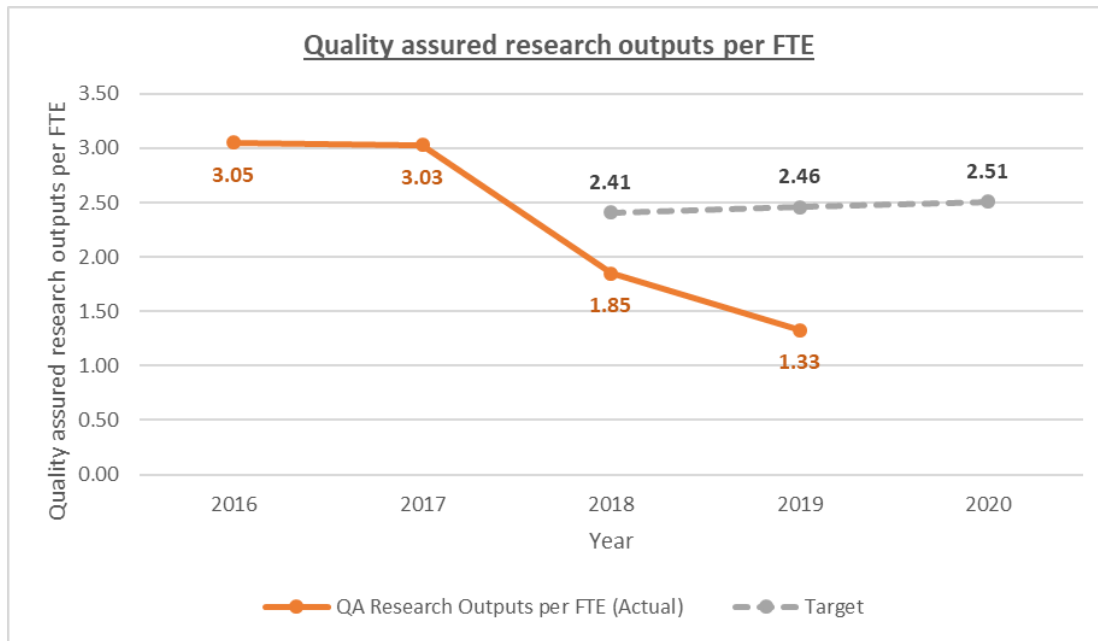


Figure 1: Number of quality assured research outputs per FTE along with the target 2020

Figure 2 below shows the total number of quality assured research outputs over the last 9 years along with the FTE for degree teaching staff for the 4 years.

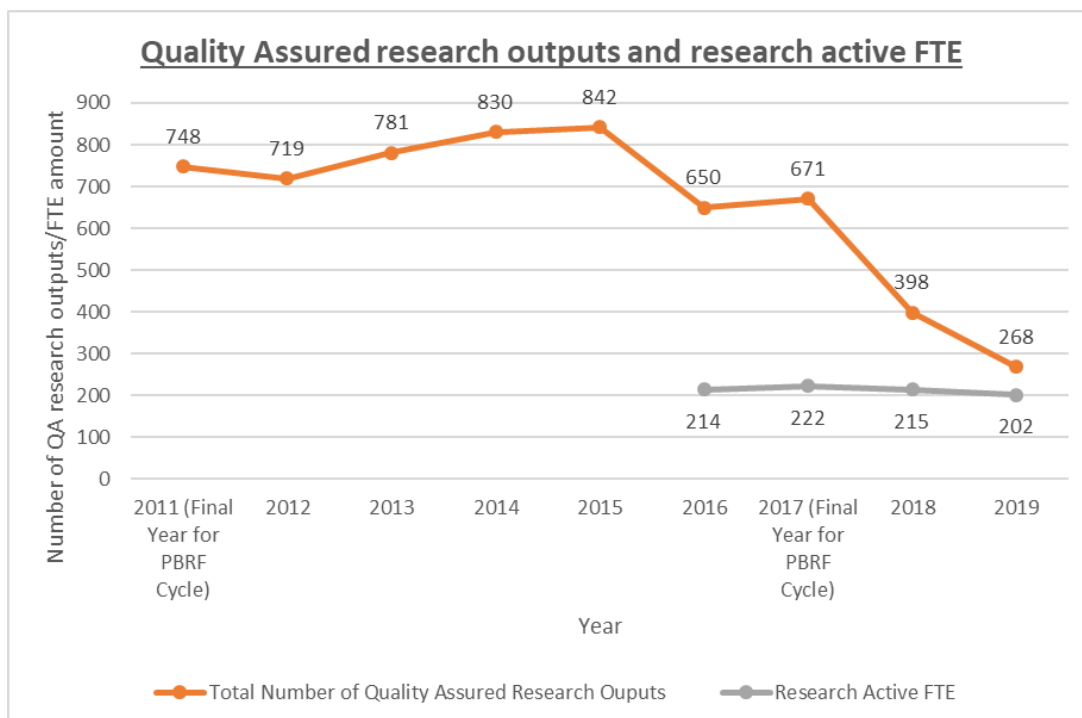


Figure 2: Total number of quality assured research outputs along with FTE for degree teaching staff

Data Insights

From 2016 onwards, there is a decline in the total number of quality assured research outputs. The following factors have significantly contributed to this trend:

- Highly productive staff have left. With the various re-structures at Unitec and academic staff leaving Unitec voluntarily, between 2014 to 2017, Unitec lost 121 PBRF 'rated' staff prior to the 2018 PBRF round.
- Unitec lost another 34(27%) of PBRF 'rated' staff after the 2018 PBRF round.
- In 2018, there was a total freeze of travel and this affected research dissemination such as conference attendance and resulting outputs, which resulted in a drop in the outputs in this area.
- There is an established pattern, which shows that immediately after the PBRF round cut-off year (2005, 2011, 2017); the number of quality assured outputs drops for a year or two. This happens because staff rush to produce outputs for the PBRF year and then they take a break from research. This factor is part of the PBRF cycle and is not unique.

Also, from 2016, there has been a decline in the number of research outputs, relative to degree teaching FTE. This second trend is less significant, but nonetheless evident in the data.

All three of the above factors could have influenced this decline. It is also possible that the increased workload related to staff reductions and the effort required in rebuilding the institutes EER category status could be a factor.

Next Steps

These recommendations from this item will go to URC for the information of this committee and the work will commence in lifting the performance of the institute.

Attachments

No attachments.

Contributors

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