
To	Academic Board	From	Marcus Williams, Director, Research and Enterprise
Title	Quality assured ¹ (QA) research outputs revised goals	Date	2019/12/12

Recommendation

The quality assured research outputs goal be set at 1.5 quality assured (QA) research outputs, per degree teaching staff FTE, per year, until 2022.

Purpose

Academic Board (AB) raised concerns about Unitec's QA research outputs goal. This goal was reviewed as detailed here.

Background

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 actually achieved in the last three years. At the December meeting of the AB, a memo was presented explaining the declining numbers of quality assured research outputs. The recommendation in this memo was to leave the quality assured research outputs goal as it is until the end of 2020 and then review it, based on various extenuating circumstances, which have effected research productivity. After further discussion, AB declined this recommendation and requested that the goal be reduced.

The current goals for QA research outputs were set in 2016 as part of the Enabling Strategies process. At this time, the count of QA research outputs was quite high due to the following reasons:

- Unitec retained a cohort of very highly productive researchers in the legacy of the institute's university status efforts, despite several restructures.
- 2017 was the cut-off year for the 2018 Performance Based Research Fund (PBRF) round of portfolio submissions and researchers were very productive prior to this deadline, as is normal across all participating institutes.

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.

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	1.5	2.41	2.46	2.51

Table 1: Quality assured research outputs per FTE and goals that were set in 2016 as part of the Enabling Strategies.

As seen in Table 1 above, from 2018, QA research outputs started declining. As outlined in the previous memo, this was due to the following reasons:

- 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 freeze on travel and this affected research dissemination such as conference attendance and resulting outputs.
- There was a post PBRF submission deadline slump in productivity, as with every round.

Academic Board pointed out that a very important point had been omitted, that five of Unitec's successful degree programmes were in 2018 announced to be taught out by 2021, impacting staff research productivity.

The current goals presented in Table 1 above, did not consider this factor.

With this in consideration, a new model for calculating the revised QA research outputs is explained and presented below.

From 2019 onwards, Unitec improved the system for the allocation of research time, creating a centralized, co-created model based on research productivity and Individual Research Plans. Only staff who are productive, or clearly demonstrating plans to become so, signed off by their manager, will receive a research-time allocation. Based on the research time allocated, staff have agreed research outputs and this is noted in the staff's ADEP plan as well as the Individual Research Plan. A majority of the staff are allocated either 0.0 FTE, 0.1 FTE or 0.2 FTE of research time. Those allocated 0.1 FTE are expected to achieve one recognized research output per year and those allocated 0.2 FTE are expected to achieve two quality assured research outputs per year, with a qualitative, excellence-based assessment of these quota which can allow appropriate flexibility in the assessment process. For example, being commissioned to represent NZ at the Venice Biennale, might be agreed by all parties to equate to two outputs, etc.

This model enables a more direct link between what level of research productivity we actually need to achieve research compliance for degree programmes as well as a strong outcome in 2024 Evidence Portfolio excellence assessment in the PBRF process. In other words, we know with greater certainty, the degree to which we need to resource research, in order to meet our goals effectively.

Based on these expectations above, on average, each degree teaching staff, who are allocated research time, are expected to generate 1.5 QA research outputs per FTE per year.

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

Reassuringly, this co-relates quite directly to the levels of productivity we are actually achieving. In 2019, the year-to-date figure for the QA research outputs is 302. The degree teaching FTE for 2019 is 202 FTE. Thus, 302 QA research outputs divided by 202 FTE gives 1.5 QA research outputs per FTE.

With this model, it is recommended that the quality assured research outputs goal be set at 1.5 QA research outputs per degree teaching staff, FTE per year, until 2022. Our performance-based research time allocation model ensures that high achieving staff, who are allocated 0.2 FTE of research time, are supported to achieve well in the 2024 PBRF. It also ensures that relevant degree teaching staff can help maintain their programmes green-lit status in the Research Productivity Traffic Light.

Research Goals	Goals		
	2020	2021	2022
Quality Assured Research Outputs per FTE	1.5	1.5	1.5

Table 2: Quality assured research outputs revised goals

Next Steps

If approved, these recommendations from this item will go to URC for the information of this committee.

Attachments

No attachments.

Contributors

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