

Research Performance Standards for Academic Staff

Summary

This document and attached Microsoft® Excel file detail minimum expectations of the research performance of academic staff at Federation University (FedUni).

These research performance standards are based on a benchmarking study of research performance expectations across the sector and have been endorsed by:

- the Vice Chancellor's Senior Team (VCST);
- the Research Committee, and;
- a combined meeting for the VCST and the Executive Deans.

Background

FedUni's Strategic Plan 2016-2020 and its Strategic Research Plan 2016-2020 both set quantitative targets for the University's research performance. In the case of the latter, a key target of the university's research performance is:

"Total Research Revenue (both external grant revenue and research block grant revenue) will be increased to at least the average of the Regional University Network members" by 2020."

The achievement of such university-wide research targets is result of the aggregation of the research performance of academic staff within FedUni.

The setting of reasonable targets for academic staff in relation to the performance of their research and research training activities is an important aspect of many planning and evaluation activities at the university level, at the faculty and school levels, as well as at the individual staff level. Such planning and evaluation activities include the Performance Review and Development Program (PRDP), determination of academic workload allocations, recognition of research centres, and academic promotion rounds.

In recent years there has been an increasing emphasis on the evaluation of the research performance of universities, disciplines within universities, and individual staff using research metrics. This is partly evidenced by the ARC's ERAs since 2010 and also by the ARC's upcoming Research Engagement Assessment in 2018.

These standards provide a university-wide basis to assist in a range of activities including assisting:

- academic staff to evaluate their own performance and to assist in the design of their career development;
- academic leaders in goal setting and performance reviews with staff in PRDPs, and;
- the university in its recruitment, confirmation, and promotion activities.

It is important that methods for assessing research performance, especially those that are based on quantitative measures, typically cannot be used in isolation from context. One well-known example of the importance of context in these standards is in the creative arts discipline where there remain considerable difficulties in satisfactorily including Non-Traditional Research Outputs (e.g. curation of exhibitions) in the evaluation methodology.

Another example of the importance of context is that it is not reasonable to expect staff who have only recently been employed in the university sector to have HDR completions until a reasonable time has elapsed to develop their HDR 'pipeline'. Nor can staff who do not possess research degrees (such as a

PhD) and hence are normally ineligible to supervise HDRs, be expected to have supervised HDR completions.

The above limitations notwithstanding, the following document and attached Microsoft® Excel file provide standards for the assessment of research performance of academic staff across FedUni. It should be emphasized again that the performance targets specify minimum expectations only and that many staff will aspire to and achieve performance well above these minima.

It should also be kept in mind that these research performance standards, whilst useful to help plan and guide applications for academic promotion, are unlikely to alone provide justification for promotion based on research performance. For example, as stated previously, these quantitative research measures cannot be used in isolation from context. Nor can these quantitative measures alone satisfactorily address the typical need in promotion exercises to assess other important dimensions of academic research performance such as duration, impact, quality, and scope.

Determination of minimum research performance standards

The endorsed standards to assess the research performance of academic staff at Federation University are as below:

1. The research performance targets set in the standards be considered reasonable minimum expectations for academic staff and be used as a tool to assist in the planning and evaluation of research performance within the University.
2. Assessment of research performance is based on three measures: external research income (RI), research publications (RP), and research training (RT).
3. Assessment of research performance in external research income, research publications, and research training will be based on 3 year rolling averages (i.e. for the 3 year period for which the latest data is available).
4. External research income where institutions or agencies (e.g. universities) external to FedUni are the lead investigating agency will be allowed (when provided by appropriate evidence) to be included in the data used for the assessment of a staff member's research performance for the years up to and including 2018. From and including 2019 the staff member's research income used for the assessment of a staff member's research performance will only include external research income that counts towards FedUni's HERDC return.

The exception to this will be staff who have been employed at FedUni for less than 3 years duration in which case external research funds from external institutions or agencies will be allowed to be included in the assessment of that staff member's research performance: this allowance will cease after that staff member has been employed at FedUni for a period of 3 years.

5. HDR completions at credited to other universities will be allowed to be included in the assessment of a staff member's research performance for the years up to and including 2018. From and including 2019 only HDR completions that count towards FedUni's HERDC return will be allowed to be included in the assessment of a staff member's research performance.

The exception to this will be staff who have been employed at FedUni for less than 3 years duration in which case HDR completions credited to other universities will be allowed to be included in the

assessment of that staff member's research performance: this allowance will cease after that staff member has been employed at FedUni for a period of 3 years.

6. Research performance targets will be determined according to the staff member's academic level, research workload allocation plus 50% of their scholarship allocation, and their main research discipline (as accorded by two-digit FOR codes, except for staff in Nursing (FOR code 1110), and in Human Movement and Sports Sciences (FOR code 1106) where the appropriate four-digit FOR code is to be used).

Where a staff member undertakes multi- or interdisciplinary research, the research performance targets will be set according to an appropriate weighting of each applicable two-digit FOR code. For example, if a staff member's research is best described by 40% FOR code 01 and 60% FOR code 08 then the appropriate targets would be derived as sum of 40% of the appropriate targets for the 01 FOR code plus 60% of the appropriate targets for the 08 FOR code.

7. Research publications will be the only measure used to assess research performance for staff at level A.
8. External research income performance will be assessed by the 'Raw' amount and not at the 'Pro-rata' amount to encourage collaboration between researchers including mentoring.
9. The quantity of external research income will be determined by Research Services according to the research income declared for FedUni's HERDC returns. External research income gained at other institutions or agencies, where allowed by these standards, will need to be declared to Research Services along with evidence satisfactory to Research Services both of the amount of funding and that these funds are used for activities that meet the HERDC definition of 'research'.
10. Research publication performance will be assessed by the 'Raw' amount and not at the 'Pro-rata' amount to encourage collaboration between researchers including mentoring.
11. Research training performance will be assessed by HDR completions.

The exception to this is that where it is not reasonable to expect staff to the institution to have attained HDR completions, e.g. when their work situations prior to being employed by FedUni did not allow the supervision of HDRs. In these cases, research performance should be assessed only by research publications and external research income. The formulae for these exceptional situations are detailed later on in these standards.

12. Research training performance will be assessed by the HDR completion 'Pro-rata' amount not the 'Raw' amount.
13. For the assessment of external research income performance, Category 1 research income will attract a weighting of 2 (i.e. will be multiplied by a factor of 2).
14. For the assessment of research publication performance, publications in top-quartile journals will attract a weighting of 2 (i.e. will be multiplied by a factor of 2).
15. A model based on the recommended targets in the attached Microsoft® Excel file allows a determination of the research performance standards for any particular combination of research workload allocation amount, academic appointment level, and FOR code.
16. To recognise that not all academic staff will or will need to meet all three of the research measures (i.e. research income, research publications, and research training), from and including 2019 a composite research performance indicator (CRPI) comprised of 50% research Income and 50% of the combined

research publications and research training measures will be used to assess overall research performance from 2019 as below:

$$\text{CRPI (\%)} = 50 \times (\text{completion of RI target}) + 25 \times (\text{completion of RP target} + \text{completion of RT target})$$

For example, if a staff member just meets all targets in each of research income, research publications, and research training, then using the composite research performance indicator, they will be considered to have just met the minimum expected research performance over the past 3 year period.

Equally, and also as but one example, if a staff member just meets the research income target, exceeds the research publication target by a factor of 2, but only meets half of the research training target, then using the composite research performance indicator, they will also be considered to have just met the minimum expected research performance over the past 3 year period. In this case, the staff member's research performance in the research publication measure exactly compensates for the under performance in the research training measure.

A further example of the use of this composite research performance indicator is that if a staff member just meets the research income target, exceeds both the research publication target and the research training target by a factor of 2, then they will be considered to have exceeded the minimum expected research performance over the past 3 year period by 50% (see below):

$$\text{CRPI (\%)} = 0.5 \times 100 + 0.25 \times (200 + 200) = 50 + 100 = 150\%.$$

A further example of the use of this composite research performance indicator is that if a staff member only meets half of the research income target, but just meets both the research publication target and the research training targets, then they will have a research performance over the past 3 year period of:

$$\text{CRPI (\%)} = 0.5 \times 50 + 0.25 \times (100 + 100) = 25 + 50 = 75\%.$$

17. To recognise the "lead in" time required to acquire external research income, the formula for quantifying the composite research performance indicator for assessing research performance for staff at levels B, C, D, and E in 2017 and 2018 will be:

$$\text{CRPI (\%)} = 33.4 \times (\text{completion of RI target}) + 33.3 \times (\text{completion of RP target}) + 33.3 \times (\text{completion of RT target})$$

In this interim formula all three measures have equivalent weighting.

18. For staff at levels B, C, D, and E, where there has not been a prior opportunity to have HDR completions (i.e. have been in a situation where supervision of HDRs has been unavailable to them for the 3 years prior to the assessment of their research performance) the assessment of research performance in 2017 and 2018 will be by the following composite research performance indicator formula:

$$\text{CRPI (\%)} = 50 \times (\text{completion of RI target}) + 50 \times (\text{completion of RP target})$$

19. For staff at levels B, C, D, and E, where there has not been a prior opportunity to have HDR completions (i.e. have been in a situation where supervision of HDRs has been unavailable to them for the 3 years prior to the assessment of their research performance) the assessment of research performance from and including 2019 will be by the following composite research performance indicator formula:

$$\text{CRPI (\%)} = 66 \times (\text{completion of RI target}) + 34 \times (\text{completion of RP target})$$

20. The research leadership expectations for Level E staff detailed in Table 1 will be used to assess research leadership performance as guided by the specific combination of discipline/academic level/workload allocation.
21. These research performance standards will be reviewed every 3 years.

TABLE 1. Academic Research Leadership Exemplars

- Provision of a continuing high level of personal commitment to and distinguished achievement in a particular area of research or scholarship;
- Fostering the research of other groups and individuals within an organisational unit and more broadly within the university;
- Development of research policy;
- Responsibility for the oversight of economic management of grants;
- Supervision of research and administrative staff and other academic staff;
- Developing policy and being involved in administrative matters within an organisational unit and within the university;
- Participating in community and professional activities related to her/his disciplinary area, including involvement in commercial and industrial sectors where appropriate;
- Involvement in professional activities including, subject to availability of funds, attendance at conferences and seminars in the field of expertise;
- Contribution to the teaching program in the field of the staff member's research;
- Sustained contribution to leadership and governance within an organisational unit of the University;
- Sustained contribution to University governance and regular contributions to policy development;
- Sustained leadership to the discipline/profession at either state, national or international levels;
- Sustained commitment to community engagement;
- Leadership in relation to research administration, quality improvement, risk management and/or governance which benefit the University;
- Strategic leadership of an academic unit, or a corporate or research function;
- Substantial sustained effective supervision and mentoring of staff;
- Sustained effective performance and leadership in relation to strategically aligned external service and engagement activities relevant to discipline / profession / expertise;
- Demonstrated leadership of collaborative work and relationships which facilitate the achievement of the University's strategic goals, between the University and external groups;
- Leadership of engagement activities with external stakeholders including for the purposes of research collaboration or dissemination.
- Formal leadership and management roles e.g. management of academic organization subunits, functions or centres;
- Formal staff supervision;
- Budget and fiscal management;
- Promotion of University enterprises or programs;
- Attendance and engagement at work unit meetings and University committee meetings;
- Participation in University activities including but not limited to graduation ceremonies and open days;
- Leadership of major committees and working groups;
- Serving as an elected staff representative on University Council, Education Committee, Research Committees, etc.;
- Staff development for administration and governance;
- Support, development and mentoring staff as appropriate;
- Leadership of a group of individuals in research centred around the Professor and broader research leadership developing the research talents of other academics;
- Leadership in providing overall management of particular functions in an organisational unit, such as coordination of research activities;
- Leadership in an academic field as evidenced by publications in outstanding journals, or as the editor of journals, authorship of books, monographs and artistic works, invited papers and presentations at international conferences and by the organization of such conferences;
- Leadership in management particularly in assisting individuals and/or groups to channel and focus their efforts;
- Leadership in the community beyond the University, particularly in professional organisations and

institutions and in industrial and/or government and business activities.