

June 2025

2026 PEER REVIEW MANUAL

**for Career Development Award applications to
the Health Research Council of New Zealand**

Table of Contents

1. Purpose of the Career Development Award Peer Review Manual.....	4
2. The Health Research Council of New Zealand (HRC).....	4
3. Te Tiriti o Waitangi.....	4
4. The HRC Career Development Awards.....	5
4.1. General and advanced fellowships	5
4.2. Māori Health Research Career Development Awards	5
4.3. Pacific Health Research Career Development Awards	6
4.4. Māori and Pacific Health Research Development Awards	7
4.5. Health Delivery Research Career Development Awards	7
5. The HRC priorities.....	7
6. Acknowledgements.....	8
7. Integrity of peer review.....	8
7.1 Disclosure and conflict of interest	8
7.2 Declaration of conflict of interest.....	8
7.3 Evaluation of interest.....	9
7.4 Levels of peer review	10
7.5 Financial interest	10
7.6 Confidentiality and retention of applications	10
7.7 A note on Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI)	11
7.8 Minimising bias.....	12
7.9 False or misleading information	12
7.10 Complaints and appeals process.....	13
8. The Career Development Award Assessment Process.....	13
8.1 Eligibility screening.....	13
8.2 Career Development Award assessing committees (CDAC)	13
8.3 Membership	13
8.4 Responsibilities of CDAC members	14
8.5 Preparing for the CDAC meeting	15
8.6 The CDAC meeting.....	16
8.7 Administration	17
9. The Health Delivery CDA assessment process.....	18
10. The Māori and Pacific Research Development Award Assessment Process.....	18
11. Council funding decisions.....	18
Appendix 1. Assessing committee fees and expenses.....	20
Appendix 2: Assessing Committee Chair's report.....	21

Appendix 3: Review summary for applicants with an interview.....22

Appendix 4: Review summary for applicants with no interview.....23

Appendix 5: Applicant rebuttal or comments template.....24

Appendix 6: Glossary of Māori terms.....25

1. Purpose of the Career Development Award Peer Review Manual

This document is for external peer reviewers and assessing committee members involved in the Health Research Council of New Zealand's (HRC) Career Development Awards.

Sections 1 to 6 focus on the overarching principles, roles, and considerations relating to the HRC peer review process.

Sections 7 to 10 focus on the assessment processes specific to the HRC Career Development Awards.

Grant-specific information including assessment processes, eligibility criteria, and assessment criteria is available in the application guidelines for each award type.

Applicants are advised to familiarise themselves with the assessment processes described in the application guidelines specific to the grant for which they are applying.

Please contact the HRC at info@hrc.govt.nz if you have any queries.

2. The Health Research Council of New Zealand (HRC)

The HRC, established under the Health Research Council Act 1990, is the Crown agent responsible for the management of the Government's investment in 'public good' health research. The Act provides for the appointment of statutory research committees (biomedical, BRC; public health, PHRC; Māori health, MHC) to advise the Council on the assignment of funds for health research. In addition, the Pacific Health Research Committee, which is a standing committee of Council, provides advice to Council regarding Pacific health research. Assessing committees (AC) are appointed by the research committees to review health research applications for funding through a variety of grant types.

The HRC funds a portfolio of health research relevant to Government goals and to the needs of the health sector in Aotearoa New Zealand. The HRC funding of innovative, high-impact health research occurs primarily through annually run funding rounds designed to support excellent research ideas, develop excellent researchers, and to address research priorities. We have also long provided targeted funding for Māori and Pacific health research.

3. Te Tiriti o Waitangi

As a Crown Agent, the HRC has a responsibility to ensure Te Tiriti o Waitangi¹ is reflected in our investments. The HRC is committed to:

- supporting research that upholds Te Tiriti o Waitangi by reflecting Te Tiriti principles (Tino Rangatiratanga, Equity, Active Protection, Options, and Partnership) in practice
- supporting and encouraging research that advances Māori health
- implementing processes to promote fairness and minimise bias.

¹ Te Tiriti o Waitangi (known in English as the Treaty of Waitangi) is an agreement signed in 1840 between Māori and the British Crown.

4. The HRC Career Development Awards

The HRC Career Development Awards (CDA) provide research training opportunities for people who will contribute to improving health and economic outcomes for all New Zealanders. A range of awards is also available to support emerging health researchers undertaking postgraduate research qualifications.

4.1. General and advanced fellowships

Clinical Practitioner Research Fellowship (CPRF)

The CPRF provides an opportunity for a clinician, who has a proven track record of research and is currently practising and employed by a healthcare organisation, to undertake a programme of research that aligns with their clinical practice and will enhance healthcare delivery in New Zealand.

Clinical Research Training Fellowship (CRTF)

The CRTF provides an opportunity for medical, dental and allied health professionals, who have a current clinical role, to undertake a PhD or equivalent qualification in any discipline whose proposed research programme will contribute to improving health and economic outcomes in New Zealand. The fellowship offers a stipend plus university fees and research costs for up to three years full-time or four years part-time.

Foxley Fellowship

The Foxley Fellowship provides support for a health sector professional to undertake a research sabbatical at a tertiary institution. The award aims to enhance links between HRC-funded research and healthcare delivery or health policy. The fellowship can be held for up to one year full-time or two years part-time.

HRC and Girdlers' UK Fellowship

The fellowship provides two years of postdoctoral experience at Green Templeton College and the University of Oxford for a New Zealand citizen whose research programme is relevant to health sciences. The fellowship now includes a repatriation component of a third year on return to New Zealand. Note that the Girdlers' Fellowship is only offered every two years.

Sir Charles Hercus Health Research Fellowship

The fellowship provides salary support for up to four years for an outstanding researcher whose scientific field has the potential to contribute to both the health and economic goals of the government's investment in research, science and technology.

4.2. Māori Health Research Career Development Awards

Master's Scholarships

The Master's Scholarship provides up to \$20,000 towards one year of personal support, plus tuition fees and a \$1,600 tikanga allowance, for students completing the research component of a Master's degree in any discipline whose proposed research programme will contribute to improving health and economic outcomes for Māori. Working expenses are not included in this award.

PhD Scholarships

The PhD Scholarship provides three years of personal support of up to \$30,000 per annum, plus tuition fees, up to \$10,000 in total research working expenses, and a \$5,000 tikanga allowance, for outstanding graduate students in any discipline whose proposed research programme will contribute to improving health and economic outcomes for Māori.

Postdoctoral Fellowships

Māori Health Research Postdoctoral Fellowships are available to applicants from all disciplines undertaking a research programme that will contribute to improving health and economic outcomes for Māori. The fellowships are to the value of \$100,000 for research-associated costs, plus a salary, which is negotiated through the host institution, for up to four years. A conference allowance of \$3,000 and \$5,000 tikanga allowance can also be claimed.

There are four Māori Postdoctoral Fellowship award types, each focusing on a different area of Māori health research: Erihapeti Rehu-Murchie, Eru Pōmare, Hohua Tutengaehe and Irihapeti Ramsden. Applicants can apply for a Māori Health Research Postdoctoral Fellowship if their research is in a different area from the four areas outlined; however, the proposed research must link to health and improving health and economic outcomes for Māori.

Māori Health Clinical Research Training Fellowship

The Clinical Research Training Fellowship provides an opportunity for Māori medical, dental, psychology, nursing and allied health professionals who have a current clinical role to undertake a PhD or equivalent qualification in any discipline whose proposed research programme will contribute to improving health and economic outcomes for Māori. The fellowship offers a stipend and covers university fees up to \$80,000 per annum, plus research costs of \$20,000. A tikanga allowance of \$5,000 can also be claimed. The fellowship has a maximum value of \$260,000.

4.3. Pacific Health Research Career Development Awards

Master's Scholarships

The scholarship provides up to \$20,000 towards one year of personal support (plus fees and a \$1,000 tufungatika allowance) for students completing the research component of a Master's degree in a field relating to health and improving health outcomes for Pacific peoples. Working expenses are not included in this award.

PhD Scholarships

The scholarship provides three years of personal support of up to \$30,000 per annum, plus fees, up to \$10,000 in total research working expenses, and a tufungatika allowance, for outstanding graduate students in any discipline whose proposed research programme will contribute to improving health and economic outcomes for Pacific peoples.

Postdoctoral Fellowships

Pacific Health Research Postdoctoral Fellowships are available to applicants from all disciplines undertaking a research programme that will contribute to improving health and economic outcomes for Pacific peoples. The fellowships are to the value of \$105,000 for research-associated costs, plus a salary, which is negotiated through the host institution for up to four years.

Pacific Clinical Research Training Fellowship (PCRTF)

The PCRTF provides an opportunity for Pacific medical, dental and allied health professionals who have a current clinical role to undertake a PhD or equivalent qualification in any discipline whose proposed research programme will contribute to improving health and economic outcomes for Pacific peoples. The fellowship offers a stipend and covers university fees up to \$80,000 per annum, plus research costs of \$20,000. The fellowship has a maximum value of \$260,000.

Sir Thomas Davis Te Patu Kite Rangi Ariki Health Research Fellowship

The Davis Fellowship is available to support emerging researchers who have demonstrated outstanding potential to develop into highly skilled health researchers. Applicants must have held a PhD or an equivalent degree for six to 10 years at the application date. The goal of the fellowship is to contribute towards achieving better health and economic outcomes for Pacific peoples.

4.4. Māori and Pacific Health Research Development Awards

These awards include Māori and Pacific Summer Studentships for undergraduates, Māori and Pacific Knowledge Translation Grants, the Māori Research Development Grant and the Rangahau Hauora training Award. Details on these awards are on HRC Gateway.

4.5. Health Delivery Research Career Development Awards

This award is an opportunity for health professionals (clinical or non-clinical) and academic health researchers to undertake a funded placement in a health delivery research team, health sector setting or health delivery policy setting. Funding includes salary supplemented by a \$20,000 contribution to the host organisation. This grant is designed to directly engage health professionals and researchers on issues of priority for our health system and improve the delivery of healthcare in New Zealand.

5. The HRC priorities

All HRC investment must have a clear line of sight to improving health outcomes for all New Zealanders, with a focus on areas of highest health need and communities with the highest health needs².

New Zealand's investment in health research must contribute to achieving the goals of the health system and the Science, Innovation and Technology sector. It is important to consider and identify how your research will add value and contribute to these goals and wider system performance. The vision for the health system is timely access to quality healthcare³. A key focus for the science system is to harness the benefits of research and innovation to drive economic transformation.

² Areas of highest health need and communities with the highest health needs are identified in the Government Policy Statement on Health 2024-2027

³ The Government Policy Statement on Health (2024-2027) outlines five priority areas; five non-communicable diseases; five modifiable behaviours; five health targets; and five mental health targets.

6. Acknowledgements

The HRC acknowledges the time, effort, and valuable contribution that committee members and external reviewers make to its assessment processes.

7. Integrity of peer review

7.1 Disclosure and conflict of interest

The HRC aims to invest in research that meets New Zealanders' health needs and has a strong pathway to impact. Peer review by external reviewers and assessing committees (AC) is part of this process.

The HRC Management of Interest Policy governs Council members, committee members, staff, contractors, and consultants. The policy is further applicable to all AC members and reviewers. A conflict of interest arises when an individual's interests conflict (or might be perceived to conflict) with the interests of the HRC as a Crown agency, such as situations in which financial or other personal considerations may compromise, or have the appearance of compromising, professional judgement in objectively assessing research applications. In managing a conflict of interest, it is important to consider both actual conflicts and the appearance of conflict.

The HRC provides external reviewers and AC members with guidelines regarding conflicts of interest management, to assist in the identification and declaration of potential conflict of interest and to help evaluate the potential impact of the conflict on the peer-review process. It is difficult to prescribe a comprehensive set of rules on interest as individuals are best able to judge their duties, links, and potential interest in a particular circumstance. The key question to ask when considering whether an interest might create a conflict is whether or not “the interest creates an incentive to act in a way which may not be in the best interests of the HRC, the research, or the researcher(s).”

To minimise potential conflict of interest, the following specific HRC guidance for AC membership has been developed:

- Anyone who is a First Named Investigator or a Named Investigator on an application under consideration in that round should not sit on the AC that is assessing their application, but they may sit on, or chair, another AC.
- A Programme Named Investigator cannot be a committee reviewer (CR) on a competing Programme application.
- HRC Council members, who chair research committees, cannot serve on an AC.

7.2 Declaration of conflict of interest

Assessing committee members and external reviewers must declare a potential conflict of interest if they:

- are a Named Investigator on any application in the funding round
- are from the same immediate department, institution or company as the applicant(s)
- have direct involvement in the research application being discussed
- have collaborated, published or been a co-applicant with the applicant(s), within the last five years
- have been involved in any National Science Challenge-funded studies or associated activities with the applicant(s)

- have been a student or supervisor of the applicant(s) within the last 10 years
- are a close personal friend or relative of the applicant(s)
- have had long-standing scientific or personal differences with the applicant(s)
- are in a position to gain or lose financially from the outcome of the application
- have direct involvement in a competing application in the current funding round
- for whatever reason, feel that they cannot provide an objective review of the application.

7.3 Evaluation of interest

External reviewers may exclude themselves from the assessment process when they recognise a potential significant conflict of interest by opting out when initially contacted by an HRC team member, or when accessing preliminary details of the application on the HRC Gateway. When an external reviewer does not recognise or declare a conflict of interest, but the potential conflict is later detected, the level of conflict will be determined and managed according to the guidelines in this section.

Declarations of conflict of interest for assessing committee members should be made as soon as possible to allow the conflict to be evaluated and an appropriate outcome or resolution to be achieved. The HRC and the AC Chairs are responsible for raising any potential conflict of interest issues, resolving any areas of uncertainty, and working with the AC in making final decisions in managing potential conflicts of interest. Potential conflicts of interest are discussed with the AC as a whole; the member concerned may be asked to leave the meeting during this discussion. Then, one of the following agreed actions is taken:

Level 1	No action is necessary.
Level 2	The AC member may be present due to their unique knowledge of the research area. They may be asked direct questions relating to the score criteria by other committee members, but they will not participate in general discussion and they will not score the application. Reviewer reports will be managed at the discretion of the HRC staff and AC Chairs.
Level 3	The reviewer report must not be considered, or the AC member must not be present during discussion and scoring of the research application

All declared conflicts are recorded, including the action taken.

Where a potential conflict of interest, such as a recent co-authored publication, arises from a person's technical expertise, e.g. biostatistics or other limited involvement, this may be considered a minor conflict if the person was/is acting in a capacity similar to that of a consultant. If the association extends to the person being considered an integral member of the research team, then this is likely to be considered a strong conflict.

In determining conflicts of interest with collaborators who are not Named Investigators but contribute in other ways to an application, the HRC will consider the declaration in line with our conflicts of interest policy. The specific involvement of the collaborating individual or organisation will be considered.

An individual who is concerned about another member's potential or actual conflict of interest should raise the issue with the Chairs or HRC, and measures to alleviate those concerns will be taken.

7.4 Levels of peer review

The HRC applies several levels of peer review to applications. There are slight modifications for each type of application, but the objective remains to minimise the influence of individual conflicts of interest by using several committees, of different membership, to decide the progress of each application. An individual is restricted in the number of roles that they can hold during a funding round. For example, Council members do not serve on assessing committees. The HRC research committees provide representatives to chair assessing committees and advise on improving assessment processes.

7.5 Financial interest

For the purposes of HRC processes, a financial interest is anything of economic value, including relationships with entities outside the research host institution. Examples of financial interests include positions such as consultant, director, officer, partner or manager of an entity (whether paid or unpaid); salaries, consulting income, honoraria, gifts, loans and travel payments.

A financial conflict of interest may compromise, or have the appearance of compromising, the individual's professional judgment in conducting, assessing or reporting research.

Applicants must disclose any financial interests resulting from sponsorship when the research is funded by a non-governmental entity.

7.6 Confidentiality and retention of applications

In agreeing to take part, please keep details of each application's assessment confidential.

This is because:

- members do not sit on the peer review process in a representative capacity
- members must feel able to discuss applications freely; and
- applicant's intellectual property needs to be protected, especially where applications have declared commercial interests.

The following guidance is for assessing committee members. These guidelines maintain confidentiality and protect the integrity of the peer review process:

- Applications and meeting documents are confidential and must not be shared with anyone. Should external advice from those outside the peer review process be necessary, members should discuss this with the HRC prior to engaging.
- Information in the application and/or directly related to the application must not be entered into generative artificial intelligence (AI) (see below for further information).
- Committee discussions and scoring for applications must remain confidential at all times. Any comments on applications are restricted to the committee discussion and cannot continue during breaks or outside of the meeting.
- Meeting materials must be destroyed at the conclusion of the assessing committee meeting.
- Committee members are encouraged to note their service on an HRC committee in CVs or other material but must not reveal the specific committee's name. The HRC publishes a list of assessing committee members each year, but members are not listed by committee. Members must not disclose the names of other members associated with a specific committee or the names of external reviewers associated with a specific application.

The following guidance is for external reviewers. These guidelines maintain confidentiality and protect the integrity of the peer review process:

- Applications and confidential links to the HRC Gateway system must not be shared with anyone. External reviewers are expected to provide comments and questions on an application that are focused on the area of the application that is most directly aligned with their expertise.
- Information in the application and/or directly related to the application must not be entered into generative artificial intelligence (AI).
- Applications and confidential meeting materials must not be shared with anyone. Should external advice from those outside the peer review process be necessary, member should discuss this with the HRC prior to engaging. External reviewer reports are anonymised for the applicant rebuttal but are identifiable to the assessing committee.
- Application and assessment materials must be destroyed once external reviewers have completed their review.

Any suspected breaches in confidentiality should be immediately reported to the HRC. The HRC will take appropriate steps to investigate and manage any suspected breach.

Committee chairs may keep copies of research applications and committee meeting notes for a period of three months following the award of new HRC research contracts. This is to ensure that any queries regarding the outcome of funding results can be clarified. The primary committee reviewer (CR1) of an application may retain notes until appropriate review summaries for applicant feedback are complete. Due to the risk of sensitive or confidential information being lost, applications and meeting materials should be stored as electronic files in a secure system instead of paper copies.

7.7 A note on generative artificial intelligence (AI)

*Generative AI uses prompts and models to create and generate outputs closely resembling human-created content.*⁴

Entering information from an application into generative AI tools as part of undertaking peer review breaches the HRC's Confidentiality policy (as defined in the Confidentiality section above).

In addition to breaching confidentiality requirements, the use of generative AI to inform peer review would be considered to compromise the integrity of the HRC's peer review process, through the introduction of biases, inappropriate comments, generic statements, and/or restatements of the application.

If the HRC identifies that an external peer reviewer has used generative AI when completing their review, appropriate action will be determined and managed by HRC staff, and the report will not be used in the assessment process.

⁴ Definition from: <https://www.digital.govt.nz/standards-and-guidance/technology-and-architecture/artificial-intelligence/responsible-ai-guidance-for-the-public-service-genai>

7.8 Minimising bias

In addition to managing conflicts of interest related to individuals, the HRC continually seeks to minimise the impact of unfair and unreasonable bias related to gender, age, ethnicity, disability, or any other grounds prohibited by the Human Rights Act 1993. In addition, the HRC seeks to minimise the impact of biases more specific to the health and research sectors, such as those related to discipline, methodological choices, or research background. This is not an exhaustive list; the HRC acknowledges there are numerous biases that can unfairly influence assessment, and that these can intersect and have a cumulative negative impact.

While a peer review process inherently relies on subjective assessment, the HRC aims to minimise the impact of various biases by ensuring that the assessment of each application is informed by experts with a diverse range of perspectives as well as subject matter knowledge.

The HRC actively manages committee composition to minimise potential impacts of bias and has steps in place to reduce the influence of bias during assessing committee meetings. For example, committee members are asked to watch a training video about bias, and this is discussed at the start of each meeting. Committee Chairs, supported by HRC staff, are briefed to manage discussions to ensure that the knowledge contributed by each member is respected.

An assessing committee meeting code of conduct is presented to the committee at the start of the meeting; members are asked to adhere to the code and keep it front of mind throughout the meeting process. The HRC has mechanisms in place to monitor for the expression of biases in reviews and discussion, and to intervene to minimise impact and recurrence, which we will continue to improve.

HRC Assessing Committee Code of Conduct

As an organisation, the HRC aims to ensure that:

- diversity, equity, safety, and inclusiveness are embedded in our assessment processes, and that diverse perspectives are respected and valued
- committee members are not placed in unsafe positions through either exposure to, or negative impact from, discriminatory, biased or disrespectful comments
- applicants and applications are assessed objectively, constructively and respectfully.
- the committee meeting process is undertaken according to the principles of HRC assessment, which helps ensure:
 - conflicts of interests are managed appropriately, in line with best practice and HRC policy
 - confidentiality is maintained
 - discussion/scoring is fair and balanced
 - there is “round table” expertise and discussion
 - decision-making is impartial and non-discriminatory.

All discriminatory and biased assessments are a detriment to the quality of our application assessment process.

Embedding diversity, equity, safety, and inclusiveness in HRC assessment processes is a critical step in ensuring that we fund high-quality, high-impact research that improves health equity within New Zealand.

7.9 False or misleading information

Once submitted to the HRC, a funding application is considered final and no changes will be permitted, although it may be withdrawn. The application is the primary source of information available for assessment. As such, it must contain all the information necessary for AC

assessment without the need for further written explanation or reference to additional documentation at the meeting. All details in the application, particularly concerning any awarded grants, must be current and accurate at the time of application.

If an application contains false or misleading information, it may be excluded from any further consideration for funding.

If the HRC believes that the omission of information or inclusion of misleading information is intentional, it may refer the matter to the host institution for the situation to be addressed under the provisions of the organisational code of conduct. The HRC also reserves the right to not accept future applications from the relevant investigators and/or to pursue legal action if appropriate. Examples of false or misleading information in an application include, but are not restricted to:

- violation of the standard codes of scholarly conduct and ethical behaviour
- providing fictitious CVs or biographical sketches, including roles in previous research
- omitting advice of publications which have been retracted or are to be considered for retraction
- falsifying claims in publications records (such as describing a paper as accepted for publication when it has only been submitted).

7.10 Complaints and appeals process

The HRC has a policy for considering and ruling on allegations of unfairness from an applicant for any HRC research funding. Complaints or requests for review of an application outcome must be submitted in writing, through the research office of the applicant's host organisation if one exists, or directly to the HRC in the absence of an organisational research office. An applicant may submit a complaint or request for review if they consider their application has been processed unfairly or differently from other like applications, setting out the way in which the applicant feels the application was processed differently, the alleged unfairness, and the remedy sought.

8. The Career Development Award Assessment Process

8.1 Eligibility screening

The HRC will conduct an initial eligibility screening of all applications. Therefore, all applications assessed by the external peer reviewers and assessing committees are deemed eligible for funding.

8.2 Career Development Award assessing committees (CDAC)

Applications will be assigned to the relevant Career Development Award assessing committee (CDAC). For instance, the General Career Development Awards and Advanced Fellowships will be assessed by the General CDAC, the Māori Health Research Career Development Awards will be assessed by the Māori CDAC, and the Pacific Health Research Career Development Awards will be assessed by the Pacific CDAC. The number of CDACs formed will depend on the number of applications received.

8.3 Membership

Each CDAC consists of the Chair(s) and other committee members, with overall membership dependent on the expertise requirements and the number of applications to be assessed. Members represent a mix of disciplines and are appointed based on their research expertise and ability to effectively assess the applications received in that funding round.

Members are expected to have:

- postgraduate qualifications in a discipline relevant to health research
- a track record as an active health researcher and be a Named Investigator on a funded research proposal submitted to a relevant funding agency (e.g. HRC, Cancer Society) in the past three years.

All members must be able to carry out the roles and responsibilities of a committee reviewer, i.e. lead the discussion on their assigned applications. As such, postgraduate students would not generally be eligible. To minimise year-to-year scoring variation, some of the members should have previous experience on the CDAC.

The research committees and HRC staff nominate and select the CDAC Chair(s) to achieve widespread representation. Career development awardees or emerging researchers may be invited to sit on the CDAC.

When awards are partly funded by a third party, the CDAC membership may be augmented by a person(s) representing that third party.

8.4 Responsibilities of CDAC members

General

AC members must declare at the outset any potential conflicts of interest, specific to applications to be assessed by the committee, so that their impact on the assessment process is managed appropriately.

To minimise potential conflicts of interest, the following is a key consideration for AC membership:

- an assessing committee member should not sit on a committee if they are a First Named Investigator or a Named Investigator on an application under consideration by that committee

This means that anyone who is a First Named Investigator or a Named Investigator on an application under consideration in that round should not sit on the committee that is reviewing their application, but they may sit on or chair a different committee.

AC members are required to keep all information about the assessment of research applications confidential, i.e. they may not discuss outside the AC meeting specific details about applicants, applications or outcomes. However, they can talk about their AC experience to colleagues who are developing applications.

Chairs' responsibilities

The HRC supports the appointment of co-Chairs where there is appropriate expertise, as this helps to spread workload, achieve balance in chairing style and allow for succession planning. Consideration should also be given to limiting the term of an assessing committee chair, e.g. in line with their research committee term. The main responsibilities of the AC Chairs, with support from HRC staff, may include the following:

- to approve (as required) the allocation of applications to be assessed by the AC
- to approve and suggest potential committee members, taking into consideration: expertise, conflict of interest, institutional spread, location, gender balance, international balance, turnover of members, and Māori and/or Pacific expertise
- to approve and suggest committee reviewer (CR) assignment of applications
- to manage potential conflicts of interest

- to attend the Chairs' online meeting (where available)
- to ensure the assessments are fair and balanced
- to work with the HRC team to actively mitigate against and manage and respond to instances of bias in the meeting discussion
- to ensure that all committee members contribute to the discussion
- to ensure that committee discussion covers all scoring criteria
- to provide a Chairs' report with the committee's feedback on the assessment process
- to approve review summaries after the meeting
- to help to respond to any complaints.

It is the responsibility of the Chairs and HRC staff to resolve any concerns regarding the integrity of the assessment process.

Committee reviewer (CR) roles

In addition to reading and contributing to the discussion of all proposals reviewed by the CDAC, each committee member may be assigned CR responsibilities for several proposals. Assignment to CR roles is undertaken by the HRC Investment Process Coordinator in consultation with the CDAC Chairs. This is done considering expertise, potential conflicts of interest, and workload.

The CR of an application may be required to:

- recommend external reviewers
- provide a CR report
- present an overview of the proposed research to the committee during the meeting
- ask proposal-specific questions when interviewing applicants
- write a review summary for shortlisted applicant feedback.

Where external peer review forms part of the assessment process, the HRC works to ensure that at least two external reviewer reports are obtained for each application. The CR will also be asked to recommend several alternate external reviewers to reach the required number of reports. It is the role of the HRC to coordinate and oversee all communications with the reviewers. Committee members and applicants should not contact reviewers.

8.5 Preparing for the CDAC meeting

Before the CDAC meeting, committee members will be given access to the applications to be assessed, along with additional details about the round or grant type, and any other relevant instructions or information.

Committee members will not have access to any applications for which a strong conflict of interest has been identified. Depending on the round or grant type, further documentation and information may be provided closer to the meeting date (for example, peer reviewer reports and applicant rebuttals).

Committee members are expected to read all the applications assigned to the committee and all associated documentation to contribute to the discussions at the meeting.

Pre-meeting preparation is an important part of the assessment process, and members must allow sufficient time to read all proposals. The time needed depends on the number of applications; approximately 20 minutes is typical.

For some meetings, members will need to provide preliminary scores, which are used to rank the applications. Based on these preliminary scores, a proportion of the lowest-scoring applications may be triaged and not discussed at the meeting; the committee members will be updated as required.

8.6 The CDAC meeting

Generally, a full day is required for the CDAC meeting(s). Members should ensure that they are available for the full meeting period. CDAC meetings are held using Zoom.

The meeting starts with a briefing from the HRC Investment Process Coordinator. The briefing includes procedures for managing conflicts of interest, the CDAC meeting process, and a review of the assessment and scoring criteria for the research proposals.

The remainder of the meeting is as follows:

- declaration of conflicts of interests
- committee reviewer comments
- interview shortlisted applicants*
- group discussion
- scoring
- note review summary points.

**for Clinical Practitioner Research Fellowship applications, Sir Charles Hercus Health Research Fellowship applications, and Sir Thomas Davis Te Patu Kite Rangi Ariki Health Research Fellowship applications.*

After all applications have been scored, the committee will produce a ranked list, which will be used to make a funding recommendation to the HRC Council.

Scoring

The score criteria vary between award types; however, they generally assess:

- the suitability of the applicant
- the research environment
- the proposed design and methods
- the health significance of the proposed research.

Each application is scored on a 7-point scale for each scoring criterion.

Score	Criteria descriptor
7	Exceptional
6	Excellent
5	Very good
4	Good
3	Adequate
2	Unsatisfactory
1	Poor

The assessing committee will primarily focus on the candidate and their potential development as a health researcher during the term of an award, as well as considering the potential contribution of the health research project to improving health outcomes. However, applicants should note that HRC awards are highly competitive and that all criteria will be considered.

During the CDAC meeting, all applications will be scored independently.

Re-ranking procedure

After all applications have been scored, the ranked applications are considered by the CDAC for possible re-ranking of applications on a case-by-case basis to remedy perceived inconsistencies. This procedure will allow any application in the ranked table to move up or down by one position at a time:

- Any CDAC member may bring forward an application for re-ranking.
- Conflicts of interest are notified and managed in the usual way.
- The application under consideration would have its scores modified, after appropriate discussion and agreement, by adding a maximum of +0.5 points to one or two of the scoring criteria of choice to move the application under consideration.

Re-ranking of other applications can be done using an iterative process until a final ranked list is reached.

Note: Once the proposals have been scored following discussion by the CDAC, scores cannot be reviewed or adjusted at the conclusion of the meeting.

Fundable and Not Fundable line

At the end of the meeting, all proposals are ranked according to score. The CDAC then:

- identifies the proposals assessed as not fundable (NF)
- identifies the proposals assessed as fundable (F).

The Fundable/Not Fundable line refers to the position in the ranked list of applications. Applications below the fundable line are of insufficient quality; therefore, irrespective of available budget, they should not be funded.

8.7 Administration

Expenses

Fees and other expenses payable to committee members are listed in [Appendix 1. Assessing Committee Fees and Expenses.](#)

Meeting review

A review of the committee's effectiveness and functioning is the final responsibility at the end of any AC meeting. All members can provide comments and suggest areas of improvement. The AC Chairs are asked to provide a short report noting issues that would be useful for future rounds. Feedback should be the consensus view of the committee, or clearly identify where the view is that of an individual. A Chair's report template is in [Appendix 2. Assessing Committee Chairs' Report.](#)

The feedback provided by committee members, either at the meeting or later, gives the HRC insight into any concerns or positive features that can be used to improve or maintain a high-quality peer review process.

Where the opportunity exists to evaluate the effectiveness, efficiency and/or quality of the HRC funding processes in support of quality improvement and/or adding to the evidence base for research funding, the HRC may choose to design and conduct a study to support this.

9. The Health Delivery CDA assessment process

The Health Delivery Research Career Development Award applications will be assessed by a Health Delivery Portfolio Panel.

The following steps will be completed to assess these applications:

- The HRC will check all applications to determine that the eligibility criteria have been met.
- Eligible applications are assigned to the portfolio panel members.
- Portfolio panel members individually review the applications against the assessment criteria and confirm one of three options for each criterion:
 - Yes – the application fully meets the criterion
 - Yes – the application adequately meets the criterion
 - No – the application does not meet the criterion.
- If the majority of the assessing panel agrees that any assessment criterion has not been met, the application is considered not fundable.
- If an application is deemed fundable but receives one 'No' for the Māori Health and Equity criterion, it will undergo additional consideration by portfolio panel members with specific Māori Health and/or equity expertise to reach a consensus on whether the application meets this criterion.
- All fundable applications will be assigned a score and ranked.

10. The Māori and Pacific Research Development Award assessment process

The Māori Research Development Award applications (Māori summer studentships, Māori Rangahau Hauora training award, Māori Research Development grant, and the Māori knowledge translation grants) will be assessed by a separate Māori Health Assessing Panel.

The Pacific Research Development Award applications (Pacific summer studentships and the Pacific knowledge translation grants) will be assessed by a separate Pacific Health Assessing Panel.

The following steps will be completed to assess these applications:

- The HRC will check all applications to determine that the eligibility criteria have been met.
- Eligible applications are assigned to the panel members.
- Panel members individually review the applications against the assessment criteria and score based on a 7-point scale for each score criterion.
- Applications will be ranked to form a funding recommendation.

11. Council funding decisions

The Council makes funding decisions for all applications for all grant types. Funding recommendations are prepared by HRC staff for Council consideration, following completion of the assessment process for all applications to that funding round. Information provided to Council includes scores and committee recommendations, assessment process, budget availability, and any other relevant information requested by Council.

Council manages any members' conflicts of interest (in relation to applications or applicants) in the same way as described in this manual for those involved in the peer review process.

Appendix 1. Assessing committee fees and expenses

Fee Schedule

Career Development Award Assessing Committee (1-day meeting)		
	Committee Chair	Committee Member
Meeting fee (<i>per diem</i> x 1 days)	\$300	\$225
Meeting preparation fee (reviewer reports, search for reviewers and pre-scoring as required, review summaries)	\$450	\$450
Total	\$750	\$675

Health Delivery Portfolio Panel (independent scoring)	
Review fee	\$450
Māori health and equity report fee (as required)	\$225
Total	\$675

Māori Health Assessing Panel (independent scoring)	
Review fee	\$450
Total	\$450

Pacific Health Assessing Panel (independent scoring)	
Review fee	\$450
Total	\$450

Expenses

Please note that fees will be paid upon full completion of committee commitments.

An expense claim form is provided to members. Members should keep an accurate account of expenses and submit receipts with the claim.

Printing costs

Printed copies of applications will not be distributed to all committees. However, some committee members may wish to have hard copies to work with. In that case, printing costs may be claimed as an expense.

Appendix 2: Assessing Committee Chair's report

Committee name	
Chair	
Date(s)	
Investment Process Coordinator	
CDA	

Please provide brief comments or bullet points in the following sections. This confidential information will be forwarded to the HRC statutory committees and used for the continuous improvement of HRC processes.

1. **Administration and communications**
2. **Committee membership, expertise and working relationship**
3. **Integrity of the process**
 - Management of COIs
 - Maintaining confidentiality
 - Mitigating against bias
4. **Assessment of applications**
 - Assessment of Māori health advancement
 - Virtual meeting environment
 - Key recommendations
5. **Comments about HRC Gateway**
6. **Other comments**

Appendix 3: Review summary for applicants with an interview

Name of award			
Applicant surname		HRC Reference	
Title of application			
Host			

Note to committee reviewer: Please give careful consideration to the information and wording provided below as it will be useful for both successful applicants (in helping to shape their research) and for unsuccessful applicants (in preparing future research applications). Comments should be clearly worded, reflect the committee's discussion, and ideally be no more than one page or 6-8 bullet points total. (Please delete this text before you submit the completed review summary to the HRC)

With regard to the criteria for assessing and scoring the application:

1. Provide no more than three key strengths and three main weaknesses or issues identified by the assessing committee as important enough to influence the scoring of this application.

Key strengths

Main weaknesses or issues

2. Additional comments including overall impression, writing of application, performance during interview, Māori health advancement and budget, etc.

Appendix 4: Review summary for applicants with no interview

Name of award			
Applicant surname		HRC Reference	
Title of application			
Host			

Note to committee reviewer: Please give careful consideration to the information and wording provided below as it will be useful for both successful applicants (in helping to shape their research) and for unsuccessful applicants (in preparing future research applications). Comments should be clearly worded, reflect the committee's discussion, and ideally be no more than one page or 6-8 bullet points total. Please delete this text before you submit the completed form to the HRC.

With regard to the criteria for assessing and scoring the application:

1. Provide no more than three key strengths and three main weaknesses or issues identified by the assessing committee as important enough to influence the scoring of this application.

Key strengths

Main weaknesses or issues

2. Additional comments including overall impression, writing of application, Māori health advancement, and budget, etc.

Appendix 5: Applicant rebuttal or comments template

Applicant surname		HRC Reference #	
Funding round		Due Date	
Title of research			

Instructions (delete after reading): All applications have a 2-page limit. The page limit includes references. Do not change the default margins and font (size 11) although you should use bold and underlining for emphasis. Try to leave spaces to improve legibility. Ensure to address all the issues raised by the reviewers, remain objective, and avoid emotion in your rebuttals.

Appendix 6: Glossary of Māori terms

Ahua	Feeling
Ao	World
Aroha	Love
Ataahua	Beautiful
Hauora	Health
He aha te mea	What is this thing
Hiamoe	Sleepy
Hinengaro	Mental
Hoki	Also
Hui	Gathering
Iwi	Tribe
Kaha	Strong
Kai	Food
Kaimahi	Workers
Kaitiakitanga	Guardianship
Kaiwhakahaere	Organisers
Kanohi ki te kanohi	Face to face
Karakia	Prayer
Karanga	Call
Katoa	All
Kaumatua	Elder
Kaupapa	Topic
Kaupapa Māori	Māori research ideology
Kawa	Protocol
Kawakawa	Pepper tree, <i>Macropiper excelsum</i>
Koe	You
Koha	Gift
Korero	Talk
Koutou	All of you
Kuia	Elderly lady
Mahana	Warm
Maioha	Heartfelt
Mana	Prestige
Mana tangata	Self-determination
Mana whenua	Local tribe
Marama	Moon

Matakite	Spiritual insight and gifts
Mātauranga	Education
Mātou	Us
Mema	Member
Mihi/mihimihi	To greet
Mutunga Kore	Never ending
Nui	Great
Oranga	Well-being
Ō tātou	Ours
Pono	True
Pōwhiri	Welcome ceremony
Pūkenga	Abilities and skills
Rangahau	Research
Rangatahi	Youth
Rangatira	Chiefly
Rawa	Really
Reo	Language
Rongoā	Traditional Māori medicine
Rōpū	Group
Tangata whenua	Local people
Te	The
Te Hau Kāinga	The home of origin
Teina	Younger relationship
Tēnei	This
Tika	Right
Tikanga Māori	Māori customs
Tinana	Physical
Tino rangatiratanga	Māori control and sovereignty
Tohunga	Priest
Tuakana	Elder relationship
Tuakiri-ā-Māori	Māori cultural identity
Tupapa	Foundation
Uara tau	Guiding values
Wahakura	Flax woven baby basket
Wāhine hapū	Pregnant women
Waiata	Song
Wairua	Spiritual
Wānanga	Forum

Whānau	Family
Whānau, Hapū, Iwi	Family, Sub-tribe, Tribe
Whānau Ora	Family wellbeing
Whaikōrero	Formal speech
Whakapapa	Genealogy
Whakarauora	Survivor
Whakarongo	Listen
Whakaruruhau	Safety
Whakawhānaungatanga	Collaborative family relationships
Whare Tapa Wha	Four-sided house, Māori model of health encompassing taha tinana, taha wairua, taha hinengaro and taha whānau
Whenua	Land