

**GUIDELINES FOR MARSDEN FUND REFEREES
(FOR FAST-START APPLICATIONS)**

The Marsden Fund has been established to support excellent research and researchers. The Marsden Fund will thus enhance the underpinning knowledge base in New Zealand, and broaden and deepen the research skill-base in New Zealand. Research funded from the Marsden Fund is not subject to priorities set by government. The Marsden Fund places emphasis on originality, on high quality research, on fostering the best researchers, including young researchers, and on enhancing the international reputation of New Zealand research. The Marsden Fund is not expected to fund research that is clearly more appropriate to other sources of public funding.

In supporting investigator-initiated research the Government is ensuring that New Zealand is contributing to, and benefiting from, the advancement of knowledge globally and is fostering a diversity of research activities of the highest calibre. The Marsden Fund also provides for the long-term and sometimes serendipitous aspects of research, which may lead to profound or unexpected discoveries, or catalyse significant developments in previously unrelated and strategically important fields of knowledge.

Your role as a referee is an integral part of the appraisal process. Your detailed comments help in the final assessment of the proposal, and to provide feedback to the applicant. Referees used by the Royal Society are anonymous - names are not disclosed to the applicants.

- **If you consider you are not qualified to comment on the proposal or do not want to act as a referee, please advise the Administration Officer as soon as possible so another referee can be contacted.**
- **Please note: pages one and two of the Referee Report Form go back to the applicant for comments but page three remains confidential to the Marsden Fund Council.**

- **If you consider that you have a conflict of interest describe its nature, on page 3 of the Referee Report Form, after appraising the application.**
- **If the conflict of interest is serious, please return the proposal without appraising it.**
- **The contents and ideas contained in the proposal are confidential in every respect. This includes intellectual property, financial and all other information. *For this reason, the proposal material is not to be used and should be destroyed once your review is completed.***

Referees who have assessed proposals will receive a list detailing the successful programmes during September 2007.

FAST-START INITIATIVE

The Fast-Start programme is targeted at researchers who have staff positions at New Zealand universities, Crown Research Institutes and other research organisations, and who are trying to establish independent research careers and create research momentum. This programme is intended for people at the start of their careers and not those who have already developed research careers but have only recently gained their PhD degree. It is also intended that the applicant should be involved in their own research programme and not be merely part of a larger group.

The criteria for eligibility depend on the way in which a researcher's career has developed prior to applying. If the researcher has proceeded from their undergraduate or Masters studies to their PhD studies before taking up employment in a research-related position, then to be eligible to apply for this programme a researcher must:

- have not previously been a Principal Investigator on a Marsden Fund contract, and
- have no more than 7 years' research experience since completing their PhD.

For researchers who took up employment in a position that involved a component of research before commencing their PhD studies or who do not hold a PhD, then to be eligible to apply for this programme a researcher must:

- have not previously been a Principal Investigator on a Marsden Fund contract, and
- have no more than 10 years' research experience since commencing their research career (including the time taken to undertake their PhD studies, if relevant).

In both instances, time spent on parental leave or in non-research related employment is excluded from the yearly count of research experience.

Applicants wishing to bid into this programme may apply for up to \$85,000 per year (GST inclusive) for research programmes lasting up to 2 years. At the current level of funding, the Marsden Fund is able to support between 20 and 25 new Fast-Start programmes each year. The purpose is to support excellent research by promising individuals and to give an impetus to their careers by promoting them as sole Principal Investigators in their own research programmes. While linkages with established researchers, as Associate Investigators, both within and outside New Zealand are useful and encouraged, the emphasis for this funding is on individual researchers in the early stages of their careers.

CRITERIA FOR REFEREEING

Referees should address their comments primarily to each of the following criteria and base their judgment on them.

- a) **Merit of the proposal**, incorporating originality, insight and research excellence.
- b) **Potential of the researchers** to contribute to the advancement of knowledge.

In the overall rating, more weighting is to be given to a) than b).

Please note that applicants have had both word and space limitations imposed on them (one page for “Background”, one page for “Overall Aim of the Research” and three pages for “Proposed Research”), which may affect the amount of detail they are able to include.

GRADING SYSTEM

The applications have already been considered in a preliminary assessment round. Some of the applicants have been asked to make full applications, which are then sent out to referees for comment.

Please provide an overall grade for the proposal. Please use the following scale, which is reproduced on the Referee Report Form:

| <u>Grade 1</u> | <u>Grade 2</u> | <u>Grade 3</u> | <u>Grade 4</u> | <u>Grade 5</u> |
|-----------------------|----------------------|-------------------------------|----------------|--------------------------|
| Outstanding Top 5% | Excellent Top 10% | Well above average Top 20% | Above average | Average or Below average |

If you have received any proposals for review from international funding agencies, please benchmark Marsden proposals against these.

REFEREE'S COMMENTS

Please comment on the feasibility, significance, technical aspects and originality of the proposal and the potential of the researchers to achieve the objectives. Please also include a paragraph on how the proposal could be improved. Comments should be consistent with the grades given. Your comments are essential in making final judgements on the applications, as the assessment panel consists of researchers from a broad range of disciplines. Gradings without comments may be discounted by the Marsden Fund Council. Please make your comments to the applicant using the space provided on Page 2 of the referee's report form. Feel free to continue on an additional page if you wish to comment more extensively.

IDENTIFYING EXCELLENT RESEARCH AND RESEARCHERS

a) “Merit of the proposal” criterion

Excellence may be determined by consideration of the merit of the proposal, its design and planning, and how the research compares with other New Zealand or international research in the same field.

Your assessment of *value* of the research may consider whether the work outlined in Sections 5-8 of the proposal form will significantly contribute to advances in theoretical understanding, develop new methodologies, contribute to new knowledge, or lead to advancement in a field by cross-fertilisation with ideas and results from another field.

Often the *design and planning* of a programme of research determines its success. Good design and planning are determined by whether the overall proposal and its specific objectives have a clear focus, and the methods and experimental or sampling design are likely to produce high quality results.

b) “Potential of the researchers” criterion

Assess the researcher's potential to contribute to the advancement of knowledge. As an applicant in this programme is at the start of his or her career the track record must be assessed in relation to the years of research experience. Other factors will be the quality of the research training and its appropriateness for carrying out the proposed research.

Sections 10 and 11 of the proposal form ask applicants to identify the special resources and skills needed to conduct the research. Please comment on these aspects where appropriate. You may comment, if you wish, on the timetable for the proposal (Section 9).

Budgets are not attached, as referees are not required to comment on them. Fast-Start applicants may apply for up to \$85,000 per year for programmes lasting up to 2 years. The Marsden Fund Council will assess the appropriateness of budgets. However section 16 of the application lists the time involvement of researchers.

CONFIDENTIAL COMMENTS

On Page 3 of the Referee Report Form please indicate any conflicts of interest. This page is not returned to the applicant, nor are referees identified to the applicant.

DISPOSAL OF APPLICANT PROPOSAL MATTER

Referees are asked to return **only the Referee Report Form**. Please destroy all proposal material once your report is completed.

CHECKLIST BEFORE RETURNING YOUR REPORT

Before returning your Referee Report Form(s), please ensure that:

- the *intended grade* and all comments have been entered;
- your *name* is entered on Page 3 (the last page of the Referee Report Form).

UPON COMPLETION, PLEASE SIGN AND DATE YOUR REFEREE REPORT.

If you prefer to return the form electronically, a blank referee report may be downloaded from the Web at <http://marsden.rsnz.org/info/referees.php>

Additional information on the Marsden Fund is available on this website.

REPORTS ARE DUE FOR RETURN NO LATER THAN 22 JUNE 2007

Please forward referee reports to:

Administration Officer
Marsden Fund
c/- Royal Society of New Zealand

P O Box 598
Wellington 6140
New Zealand

(Telephone +64-4-470 5799)

Please **e-mail** (preferably) or **fax** referee reports directly to the Royal Society at:

E-mail: marsden@rsnz.org

Fax: +64-4-473 1409

Attention: Marsden Fund Administration Officer

For overseas reviewers, please use email (preferably) or fax for returning reports.