



POST-IMPLEMENTATION REVIEW SURVEY RESULTS

Postgraduate Scholarships 2019-2022



The following data has been obtained from the 2019-2022 Postgraduate Scholarships (PGS) post-implementation review (PIR) surveys of peer reviewers. This document summarises key trends in these findings and details areas for improvement to better shape PGS peer review practices in the future.



PRINCIPLES OF PEER REVIEW

Peer review is the impartial and independent assessment of research by others working in the same or a related field.

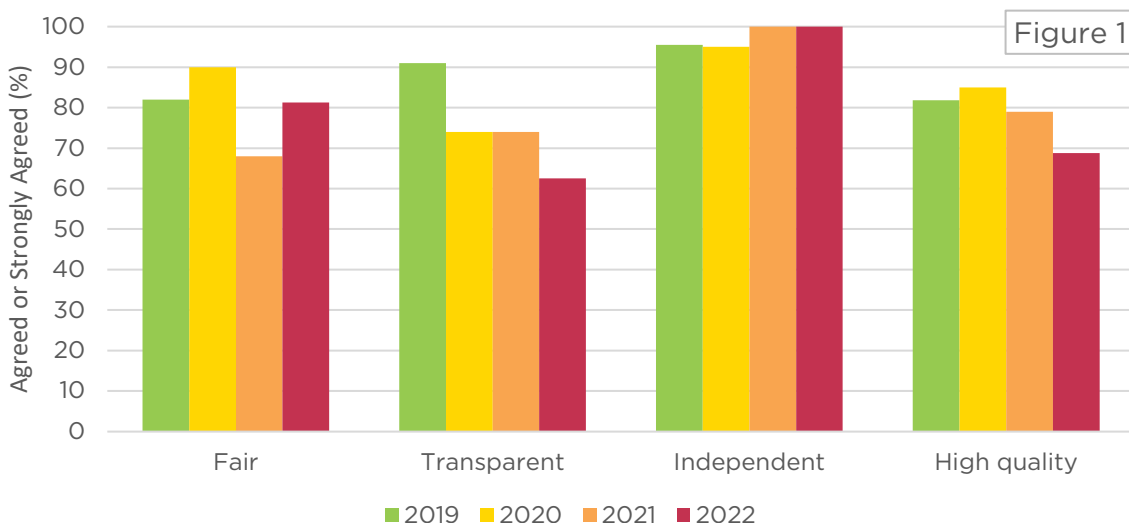
NHMRC's *Principles of peer review* are high-level guiding statements that underpin NHMRC's peer review processes and apply to all NHMRC funding schemes.

These principles include: peer review processes are fair and seen to be fair by all; transparency applies to all stages of peer review; peer reviewers provide independent

advice; and peer review processes should achieve the highest-quality decision making.

Figure 1 shows, for each of the years 2019-2022, the percentage of surveyed PGS peer reviewers who Agreed or Strongly Agreed that PGS peer review was consistent with these principles.

On average across all years, 83% of respondents Agreed or Strongly Agreed that PGS peer review processes were fair, transparent, independent and high quality. Though, in 2022, some respondents felt that lack of visibility of other peer reviewer scores affected the transparency of the process.

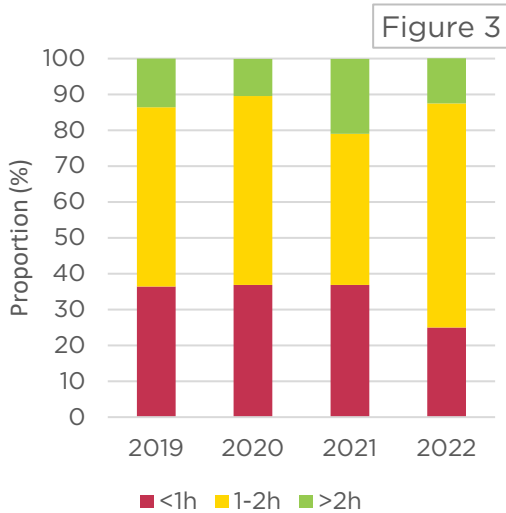
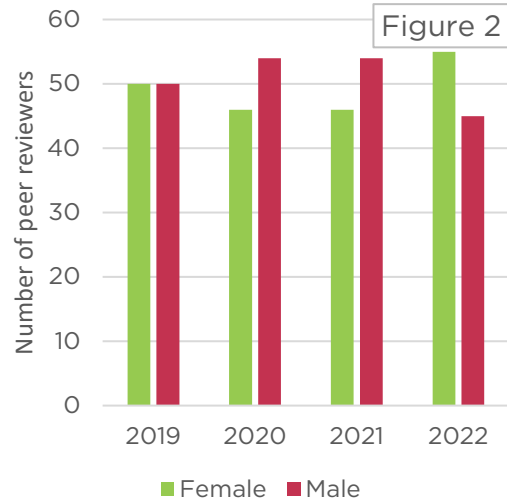




PEER REVIEWER GENDER

NHMRC's *Guiding principles for peer reviewer nominations and appointments* include balanced representation of gender as a goal. [Figure 2](#) shows numbers of peer reviewers for the 2019-2022 PGS rounds by selected gender. On average across all rounds, 49.25% of peer reviewers selected female and 50.75% selected male.*

* Only these two gender selection options were available for these rounds. NHMRC expanded its gender selection options from 2023.



TIME SPENT REVIEWING APPLICATIONS

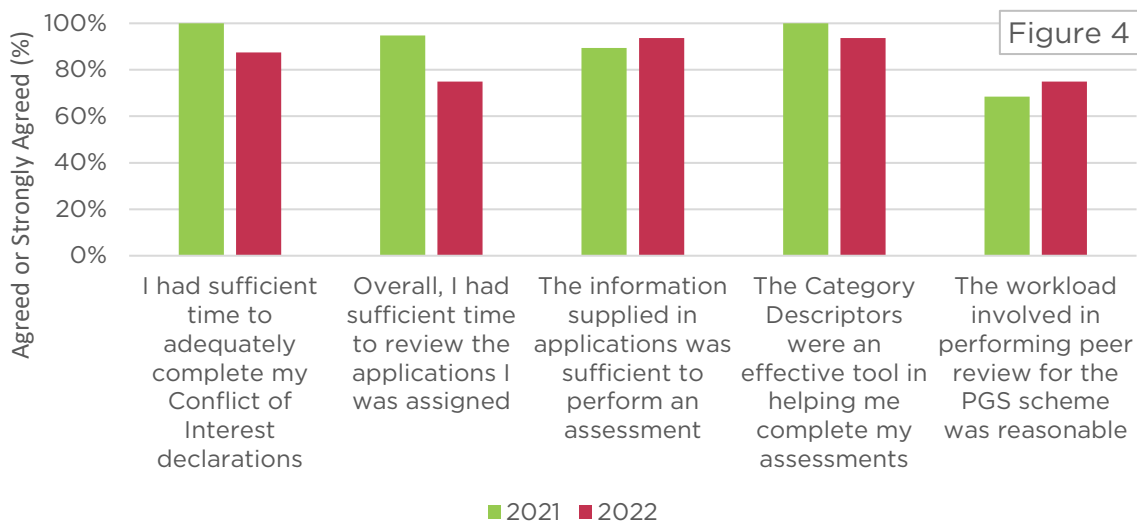
A PGS application includes a Report (which contains track record and application specific information), a Supervisor Report and an academic transcript.

Across the period 2019-2022, PGS peer reviewers spent an average of 1-2 hours assessing each application (refer [Figure 3](#)).



ASSESSMENT PROCESS

In 2022, an average of 85% of Peer reviewers Agreed or Strongly Agreed that they were comfortable with key elements of the PGS assessment process (refer [Figure 4](#)).





AREAS IDENTIFIED FOR IMPROVEMENT

The following areas for improvement were identified in the 2022 PGS round.

Stronger advice on Journal Impact Factors (JIFs)

Peer reviewers noted that some applicants included JIFs in the publication section of their application.

NHMRC is a signatory of the [San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment \(DORA\)](#) which notes that it is not appropriate to use journal-based metrics such as JIFs as a surrogate measure of

the quality of individual research articles when assessing an individual scientist's contributions. The scientific content of a paper is much more important than publication metrics or the identity of the journal in which it was published.

For 2023 and future PGS rounds, wording in the Grant Opportunity Guidelines will be updated to strengthen advice against inclusion of JIFs within applications.

Continued Sapphire improvements

Feedback from peer reviewers suggests that further improvements in accessing the Supervisor Reports in Sapphire will strengthen the PGS peer review experience.

FURTHER INFORMATION

For further information about this data, please contact the PGS team on: scholarships@nhmrc.gov.au

You can find more information about NHMRC evaluation activities at: nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/evaluation

NHMRC funding statistics and data are available at: nhmrc.gov.au/funding/data-research/research-funding-statistics-and-data

NOTE

For the four years covered by this report, respondent numbers to the PGS PIR survey as compared with the total number of survey recipients were: 22 of 42 (2019), 19 of 42 (2020), 19 of 35 (2021) and 16 of 35 (2022).