

**Proposed National Refereeing Panel for reviewing NZARE conference papers**  
**To be discussed at the NZARE AGM**  
**To be held at the NZARE Conference 6 – 9 December 2005, Dunedin**

**Introduction**

The NZARE Council decided at its May 2005 meeting to canvass NZARE members on whether and in what way(s) conference papers would be received for the annual NZARE conference. In the recent past the conference convening committee have called for papers to be submitted and these have been reviewed by panels drawn together from the local region of the conference. It was suggested that NZARE Council consider setting up a National Refereeing Panel which would draw on reviewers from all over Aoteroa-New Zealand and beyond. It was also suggested that the NZARE Council consider the option of not inviting papers to be submitted for review.

As this is an issue which affects all members it was decided to canvass NZARE members' views by preparing and circulating a paper before the NZARE Conference 2005 and placing an item on the Annual General Meeting at that conference to seek members' feedback on the options.

**Purpose**

The aims of NZARE conferences range from opportunities for NZARE to

- provide educational research and researchers a platform for their work
- enhance the reputation of the association and educational research more broadly and
- build capacity and capability around quality, particularly for emerging researchers through to
- sharing information and networking.

To support the above aims NZARE needs to find a balance between

- providing a mechanism for conference presenters to submit papers for peer review and having them assessed against a quality standard and
- providing opportunities for emerging and other researchers to test their ideas and simply share their work with others.

As well as shaping the conference programme the mechanism(s) chosen also has implications for the conference proceedings.

**Options for submission of papers**

Surveying the range of practice at education conferences around the world the NZARE Council has identified several alternatives:

- Mandatory or non-mandatory review by a national refereeing panel
- Mandatory or non-mandatory review by a local panel set up by conference convenors
- No refereeing
- A combination of the above

Currently NZARE conferences operate a combination model which offers the second (non-mandatory option) and third alternatives.

**A brief overview of the alternative mechanisms**

**National refereeing panel**

A national refereeing panel generally takes the form of a large database managed through a conference secretariat and/or a conference organiser. The policy and guidelines for these panels are set by the association (e.g. AERA, AARE, MERGA). Members of the panel are usually self-nominated and review papers within their specialist area(s) or expertise.

Referees do not have to be members of the relevant association and in many cases panels include international researchers. Some associations require panel members to meet certain criteria (e.g. with respect to qualification or prior experience of reviewing academic papers for conferences and/or journals) while other associations do not have such requirements.

The same referees are called on from one year to another with provision to refresh the dataset each year. Reviews are blind – with neither referees nor author(s) knowing details of the other. The number of reviews sought for each paper commonly ranges between two and four. Some associations publish rejection rates.

### **Local refereeing panel linked to NZARE conference site**

To date the NZARE Council has delegated responsibility to each Conference Convening Committee to form a local panel of referees in the region holding the conference. Most recently these panels have been convened in Auckland (2003) and in Wellington (2004) and co-ordinated by a member of the Conference Convening Committee.

Guidelines for implementing these panels are available, but the rules of implementation may be varied by the local organising committee. Members of the panel are usually identified through local networks and, as above, review papers within their specialist area(s). Referees are often members of the association and generally the panel does not include international researchers.

Under this system referees vary from year to year. Reviews are blind. The number of reviews sought for each paper has generally been two or three. Rejection rates may be made available.

### **No refereeing**

Associations do not require any papers to be submitted for review for conferences.

### **A combination model**

Conferences often operate a model which allows for papers to be submitted for review by conference presenters who wish to have feedback on their paper and to attain the conference reviewing standard, but also allows papers to be presented that have been rejected through the review process or that have not been reviewed. The NZARE annual conference currently operates a combination model.

As above, in previous years the NZARE Council has delegated responsibility for setting up the panel of referees to the Conference Convening Committee, but in 2005 we are trialling a system that is closer to the national refereeing panel and that draws on reviewers from throughout New Zealand and is co-ordinated by the conference organiser. Feedback on how this system worked will be available for the 2005 AGM.

### **Other components**

An option offered by some associations is the Early bird option. This provides an opportunity for emergent researchers to submit a draft of their paper early in the year so that it can be reviewed by a member of the national refereeing panel and resubmitted at the time of Call for Papers.

Although it is anticipated that many emergent researchers will have supervisors or mentors who take on this role, it provides another avenue for these researchers to develop skills on submitting conference papers.

### **What do the different models offer?**

The NZARE Council have assessed the relative strengths and weaknesses of the different models in terms of how well each can support the aims of the conference. To make this assessment the Council identified the key strengths and weaknesses of each model.

The **national refereeing model** and **local panels linked to the NZARE conference site** offer a number of potential benefits to the association and its members. These include:

- Opportunities to participate as members of the academy, an important part of academic life;
- The reputation of the association and its members is potentially enhanced with flow on benefits to educational research. This is the case with our sister associations (e.g. BERA, AERA, CSSE, AARE);
- Allows for the provision of full refereed papers to be available for conference proceedings;
- Experienced referees bring with them a familiarity with the process and mentoring skills to encourage and develop emergent researchers;

- Academic work is based on publications and this is a way of enhancing and supporting this in an era of accountability;
- In terms of the PBRF – referees contribute to the creation of a research environment and to peer esteem components;
- An increasing number of institutions are requiring refereed papers for attendance at conference. The panel mechanism ensures this is available.
- The submission of papers to refereed panels can support funding applications;
- Allows an association to make explicit basic standards for presenting – which are taken into account in the refereeing process.
- Experienced researchers may be encouraged to attend conferences if refereed papers are part of the conference culture. This process has the potential to raise the level of debate in educational research at conference.

The **national refereeing model** offers the additional advantages of:

- Drawing in the broader community of researchers in Aoteroa-New Zealand
- Ensuring a broader coverage of thematic areas for each conference
- Sharing the workload for referees across the country
- A greater consistency from year to year if managed by the association at the national level

The **local panels linked to the NZARE conference** offers the additional advantages of:

- Building capability at the local level around the refereeing role
- Panel members only being called on when the conference is being held in their region.

These two models also have some down-sides. Where **fully refereed papers** are the only option this might discourage inexperienced researchers who want to build their confidence and capability. In addition, the process needs to be enabling, not overly bureaucratic and prescriptive. There are areas in educational research where the range of reviewers available is still limited. This can apply to thematic areas or where communities of researchers are relatively small, but growing, such as Maori and Pasifika.

As well as these potential disadvantages the **local panel** provides further challenges. It is difficult for the NZARE Council to monitor the systems put in place each year and to gauge the consistency of decisions made by the panel over time. The fact that it is locally based places an additional workload on a Conference Convening Panel beyond that of the task of organising a conference. The regional community often means that there are not sufficient local members to carry out the role and this would be exacerbated if there are criteria for refereeing. And in some regions the community of researchers available for Maori research and for refereeing Pasifika papers is very small.

A **non-refereed system** has some real advantages in that it is not bureaucratic or prescriptive, it avoids refereeing papers that are vulnerable to “group-think” and those presenting at conference can try things out. Although innovation and creativity are not necessarily stifled by a refereeing process, a non-refereed system guarantees this is not the case. However, for reasons identified above, having only a non-refereed system in place can put the association at reputational risk and provides no formal mechanism for feedback to researchers wishing to present papers prior to the conference for review.

### **The proposed model**

Taking into account the above the NZARE Council proposes a model for NZARE Conferences from 2006 onwards that has two components: a **national refereeing panel** and a **non-refereed component**.

The broad aim of the national refereeing panel would be to contribute to enhancing the reputation of the association and educational research more broadly and building capacity and capability around quality in a way that is more consistent and draws on a broader range of referees for each conference.

The broad aim of the non-refereed component would be to encourage emergent researchers to use the conference as an opportunity to try things out, to provide space for those whose papers did not meet timelines for refereeing, to build capacity and capability and to share information. There are existing guidelines for people presenting non-refereed papers.

To give members an idea of what the panel might look like and how it might operate the NZARE Council has drafted some recommendations for the establishment and operation of the Panel component. This is set out in Appendix 1 and 2.

**The NZARE Council invites you to consider the proposed model and, if you are unable to attend the NZARE AGM in December, to email the Secretariat on [nzare@nzare.org.nz](mailto:nzare@nzare.org.nz) expressing a preference for or against the model by 30 November 2005. Please use the wording described in Appendix 3 to express your preference.**

## Appendix 1

The NZARE Council has drafted the following recommendations for the establishment and ongoing maintenance of the National Refereeing Panel:

### **Policy and oversight**

- Policy for the establishment, maintenance, monitoring and review of the National Refereeing Panel set by the NZARE Council consistent with its constitution;
- Overall responsibility with NZARE Council with responsibility for implementing the policy delegated to selected sub-committee and/or council member (as per the NZARE awards);

### **Members and membership**

- Membership of NZARE not required
- Nationally and internationally active researchers/academics eligible
- Panel reviewers nationally as opposed to locally based around the conference site
- Require any **two** of the following:
  - Qualifications (Masters and above)
  - Prior refereeing or reviewing (conference papers, journals, books, theses)
  - Refereed papers or articles (at least 1 within the last ten years)
- Individuals who do not meet the above criteria can be considered by the sub-committee on a case by case basis and that Members of the Panel serve for more than one year (as they wish) and not limited to one conference;
- A sub-committee of the Council takes responsibility for ensuring diversity of membership of the panel with respect to: ethnicity, institution type, methodological approach, geographical location and, where possible, representation from outside Aotearoa-New Zealand. Maori and Pasifika Caucus will discuss implications for their research and researchers
- No limits on the size of the panel

### **National Refereeing Panel Database**

- Names of Panel members held on database and
  - new members sought through networks and advertising opportunities to be a referee (notices in INPUT; website; other conferences; departments; AGM of NZARE conference)
  - database would be held by NZARE Secretariat
  - database would be refreshed by the NZARE Secretariat each year (confirmed via email) - includes dropping people off the Panel
  - application form would seek: degree of experience (emergent, experienced); years of reviewing (1 or 2, 2-5, over 5 years); contact ; member of NZARE; member of other educational organisation; qualification(s); indigenous – ethnic; topics (from a pull

down menu). The form would be designed with provision for rules for deleting from the database. Appeals to sub-committee and then to Council chair.

### **Proceedings**

- Not mandatory to have a paper submitted for refereeing to present at the NZARE conference, but only refereed/accepted papers published in full proceedings. All other presentations, abstracts only will be published with full contact details;

We have also scoped a process for the operation of the National Refereeing Panel. This follows in Appendix 2

## **Appendix 2**

The NZARE Council has drafted the following recommendations for operation of the panel:

- An Early Bird option – initial papers presented for critique before the formal refereeing begins. Papers then re-submitted for refereeing.
- Papers submitted electronically. An electronic template available on the NZARE website is an option.
- A nominated event organiser to receive papers:
  - Papers to have key words that match the categories on the database
  - Sends out papers to 2-3 blind referees and has to achieve a minimum of 2
  - Composition of the review team is to include a range of levels of expertise
  - If, in case of 2, one declines and one accepts it is sent to a third referee
  - Papers are all electronic and destroyed by referees
  - Referees complete report electronically and return to event organiser
- NZARE Council sub-committee reviews referees' reports for quality standards
- Reports returned electronically by event organiser with feedback from referees including: recommendations for change, why it was rejected (if rejected) and invitation to present even if the paper has not met referred paper criteria.
- A brief summary of the refereeing statistics would be posted on the NZARE website (e.g. rejection rates)
- No right of reply
- Complaints referred to the National Panel Sub-Committee and then to the chair of the NZARE Council (if required).
- Accepted papers will be placed in the conference proceedings in full. Two copies will also be required to be put on file for the NZCER library. The proceedings, with abstracts of non-refereed papers, will be placed on a CD-ROM and distributed to NZARE membership.
- Provision may be made for professional editing.

## **Appendix 3**

**I wish to express my support** for the proposed model for the NZARE Conference from 2006 onwards that has two components: a **national refereeing panel** and a **non-refereed component**.

or

**I do not wish to express my support** for the proposed model for the NZARE Conference from 2006 onwards that has two components: a **national refereeing panel** and a **non-refereed component**.