

Guidelines for members of Assessment Panels to distinguish between “Y” and “C” reports and deciding on a C3 rating category (Benchmarking document)

The following benchmarking methodology first introduced by Dr von Gruenewaldt at the 2015 EEC workshop was expanded to include criteria on how reports should be **assessed**:

1. The established researcher (C) rating criteria (sustained recent record; quality, conceptualisation; research methods, ongoing engagement) should be used as the **reference point/benchmark** against which researchers are assessed irrespective of age.
2. If the reviewers indicate that the applicant complies fully with all these criteria but that their research also has global impact, the B or A categories should be considered.
3. If the reviewer/s express **doubt** about compliance with these criteria, two aspects need to be considered:
 - a. The criterion or combination of criteria which is in doubt; and
 - b. The severity of the doubts expressed by the reviewer:

The following guidelines should be used:

| Criterion | Descriptors | C- | RU |
|-------------------------|--|---|--|
| Quality | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to conceptualise problems (independence, novelty etc.) • Utilisation of appropriate research methods (the use of outdated methodologies is seen to be a serious flaw) • Assessment of research findings (literature consulted, substantiation of conclusions etc.) | Reviewer recognises comparatively minor shortcomings but believes outputs have value and contribute incrementally to new knowledge creation | Reviewer identifies serious shortcomings in several outputs. |
| Sustainability | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discipline specific and/or related to complexity of problem (e.g. seminal book in history or few outputs of exceptional quality in mathematics) • Research of acceptable standard and contributing incrementally to new knowledge | If output is less than expected of academic locally within discipline | If output is way less than what can reasonably be expected locally for the discipline |
| Coherence and core area | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discipline specific - core area can be very narrowly defined in some disciplines and less so in others. • Coherence needs to be recognised by reviewer | Reviewer identifies a degree of coherence among (some of the) outputs but finds vagueness in future direction | Reviewer comments on unfocussed/opportunistic research with no indication of future direction. |

4. Using the above criteria of assessing the nature/level of doubt expressed by the reviewer, the decision on whether it is a “Y” or “C” report is then dictated by the applicant’s eligibility in terms of chronologic age and date of PhD. If eligible for the emerging category, the report is rated as Y, if not it is rated as either C- or RU.

5. The **final recommendation** for established researchers (C2 and C3 cases) are:
 - 5.1 Panel members must reach consensus on whether a report is rated a C- or RU (see item 3 above)
 - 5.2 If some (at least two) reviewers are **not firmly** convinced (C-: minor doubt) that the applicant is established = C3
 - 5.3 If most, i.e. more than 50% are not firmly convinced (C-) (i.e. minor and/or major doubts) = RU

The following **caveats** is, however, important:

- This proposed methodology remains a guideline (not a rule) and cannot replace the collective wisdom of the panel.
- Assessment panels need to be guided by the SCs and reviewers' comments on concepts of coherence, core areas and the extent to which they are relevant for a researcher in a specific discipline.
- More emphasis must be placed on the quality of the reports in assigning a final rating. Reports scored 1 and 1/2 should carry more weight than reports scored 2.