



# Marine National Facility Research Advisory Committee Terms of Reference

Version 3.1 January 2024

## 1. Purpose

Established by the Marine National Facility Steering Committee (MNF SC), the Research Advisory Committee (RAC) provides advice to the MNF SC on the Research Quality of research proposals under the Merit Assessment Process and other matters requiring expertise as needed.

## 2. Membership

The number and composition of members on the RAC is determined by the MNF SC and can change from time to time. The RAC comprises of:

- a Chair selected by the Steering Committee and that meets the criteria in Section 4 and
- no fewer than four ordinary members and that meet the criteria in Section 4.

The Committee would generally not comprise more than eight ordinary members.

The Committee will seek to include Early Career Researchers (ECR) as detailed in Section 6 and in addition to the members above.

The Chair MNF SC, Director MNF and MNF Facilities Program Director are not members of the RAC but may attend meetings as observers.

## 3. Roles and Responsibilities

The roles and responsibilities specified by MNF SC for the RAC are:

- following the Merit Assessment Process approved by the MNF SC, assess and score the Research Quality of proposals and in doing so, consider responses generated from the rejoinder process
- make recommendations to the MNF SC on the assessed proposals and any other matters that may impact decisions on the voyage schedule

- provide advice to MNF SC on the conduct of the applications and assessment process and its effectiveness

- declare any real or perceived conflict of interest at the outset of any RAC meeting for management in accordance with the MNF Conflicts of Interest and Confidentiality Policy

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- at all times, strictly maintain confidentiality for all aspects of RAC business as outlined in the MNF Conflicts of Interest and Confidentiality Policy.

Observers and Early Career Researchers may contribute to the assessment discussions, but their scores will not be factored in the final assessment score.

## 4. Nominations

The following criteria are used to select people for invitation as members to ensure the Committee contains an appropriate blend of skills and experience:

- ability to communicate effectively with a range of research and industry stakeholders
- capacity to critically assess research proposals
- a broad understanding of marine and atmospheric scientific domains appropriate for the assessment of proposals for use of the research vessel
- demonstrated track record in a research discipline relevant to the MNF
- experience undertaking research on a blue-water research vessel
- prior experience in serving on research assessment or advisory committees.

MNF SC seeks to ensure the membership reflects a diversity of research disciplines and institutions (Universities, government, PFRAs, industries etc.), age, gender, cultural background, and regional representation (including international) and these considerations inform appointment of members.

In addition to the membership criteria outlined above, the RAC Chair must also meet three additional criteria for appointment:

- not be an employee of CSIRO
- have experience in marine research and marine policy
- have prior experience in chairing committees.

The Steering Committee might select a Chair from within the RAC membership if the criteria above are met.

All members of the RAC are invited as experts and not as representatives of any employer or research agency.

## 5. Substitute Member

In the case one or more members cannot participate in an assessment round, the RAC Chair, in consultation with the MNF SC Chair, may seek a substitute for the meeting if it is felt that a member's absence will compromise the ability to make a robust, informed and objective assessment.

## 6. Early Career Researcher

To assist with the development of the next generation of Australian marine scientists, the MNF SC will seek to appoint up to two Early Career Researchers (ECR) as RAC members to attend meetings and contribute to discussions. While ECRs will be asked to score proposals, their scores will not contribute to the final assessment.

To be eligible for appointment, an ECR candidate should ideally have less than 10 years' experience since PhD confirmation and currently be funded in an Australian postdoctoral position such as a Discovery Early Career Researcher Award (DECRA) or Ocean Sciences (OCE) Postdoctoral fellow or equivalent.

Appointed ECRs will be allocated a mentor from within the RAC membership.

## 7. Terms of Appointment

Members will be invited by the MNF SC to join the RAC - and have their term extended or ended - by an exchange of letters. Committee members can resign by letter to the Chair of the MNF SC. Initial appointment of members to the RAC will be for a term of up to three years, with the option of re-appointment for an additional term at the discretion of the MNF SC. Wherever possible, the replacement of RAC members should be phased to maintain core knowledge and experience of Committee processes within the RAC.

## 8. Sitting Fees

RAC members including ECRs and those formally appointed to observer roles, may be entitled to be paid sitting fees for meetings and work outside normal meetings. Payment will be in accordance with the CSIRO Pay and Benefits determination on committee fees for non-CSIRO members.

## 9. Meetings

Meetings of the RAC will be called by the MNF Secretariat.

The RAC will meet at least once per application cycle while additional meetings and out of session consultation may also be required, for example out of session assessment of supplementary applications for sea time.

Face to face meetings will generally be held in Hobart with all travel costs to be covered by the Marine National Facility.

In the absence of the RAC Chair, the MNF SC Chair will be asked to nominate a Chair, otherwise the members present will nominate a member to chair the meeting.

## 10. Secretariat

Secretariat services for the RAC will be provided by the MNF SC Secretariat.

Version	Date Approved	Comments	Approval/Review
1.0	April 2016		MNF Steering Committee
2.0	December 2019	Ammended to implement Committee name change	MNF Steering Committee
2.1	December 2020	Review ammendments to expand governance arrangements and align with MNF 2030	MNF Director
2.2	January 2021	Amended following feedback during OOS process	
3.0	January 2021	Approved Out of Session (Decision #392)	MNF Steering Committee
3.1	January 2024	Transposed on to updated MNF letterhead	