

Pacific Futures Reference Group Terms of Reference

1. Background

The Pacific Futures (PF) has been established as the collective voice and action body for high-achieving young and emerging scholars across the Pacific, leveraging evidence-based research and Indigenous knowledge to inform policy, foster regional scientific capacity, and promote sciences for the benefit of all Pacific peoples. The PF provides a pathway within the Pacific Academy of Sciences (PAS) to mentor and support Pacific emerging, early- to mid-career researchers (EMCRs) dedicated to addressing the complex challenges and opportunities of the Pacific region.

1(a) Vision Alignment and Guiding Principles

The PF will operate in accordance with the values and principles of the PAS, including:

- Respect for Pacific cultures, languages, values, and knowledge systems
- Integrity, transparency, and accountability
- Inclusivity and diversity across the Pacific region
- Collaboration, reciprocity, and collective leadership
- Service to Pacific peoples and communities
- Intergenerational mentorship and stewardship
- Scientific excellence alongside cultural responsibility

2. Purpose

The purpose of these Terms of Reference (ToR) is to outline the objectives, scope, governance arrangements, roles and responsibilities, and implementation framework for the PF Reference Group (RG).

3. Objectives

The Objectives of the RG are:

- **Advance Pacific science policy, education, and public engagement** by strengthening dialogue and knowledge exchange between science, communities, policymakers, and decision-makers.
- **Advance Pacific-led solutions to regional and global challenges:** through scientific excellence, innovation, collaboration, and the integration of Indigenous, traditional, local, and scientific knowledge systems.
- **Promote a culture of excellence, integrity, and service** in which scientific achievement, community, leadership, innovation, and contributions to Pacific peoples are recognized and valued.

- **Support emerging Pacific scientific communities** by providing regional opportunities for recognition, mentorship, leadership development, professional growth, and collaboration.
- **Strengthen interdisciplinary, intergenerational, and cross-regional collaboration** among Pacific scholars, researchers, innovators, and knowledge holders to address shared opportunities and challenges across the Pacific.
- **Promote the recognition, protection, and responsible integration of Indigenous, traditional, and local knowledge systems** alongside scientific research to support culturally grounded, locally relevant, and sustainable solutions for Pacific communities.

4. Scope of work

The scope of work for the RG includes, but is not limited to:

Strategic Leadership and Planning

- Developing, implementing, and reviewing a multi-year PF Strategic Plan aligned with the vision, mission, values, and priorities of the PAS.
- Developing and monitoring an Annual Costed Workplan that identifies key priorities, activities, resource requirements, and implementation responsibilities.
- Identifying opportunities to strengthen the contribution of emerging Pacific researchers, scholars, innovators, and knowledge holders to regional and global scientific priorities.

Research, Knowledge Mobilization, and Policy Impact

- Promoting Pacific-led research, innovation, and knowledge exchange that contributes to the well-being and sustainable development of Pacific peoples and communities.
- Supporting knowledge mobilization activities that translate research and evidence into accessible resources, policy dialogue, public engagement, and community impact.
- Contributing evidence-informed perspectives to regional, national, and international policy discussions relevant to Pacific priorities.
- Supporting ethical engagement between scientific research and Indigenous, traditional, and local knowledge systems

Leadership Development and Capacity Building

- Supporting the professional development, leadership capability, and career advancement of emerging Pacific researchers and scholars.
- Facilitating mentorship opportunities, peer learning, and intergenerational knowledge exchange.
- Delivering capacity-building initiatives, including workshops, webinars, training opportunities, and leadership development programs.

Collaboration, Partnerships, and Regional Engagement

- Strengthening interdisciplinary, intergenerational, and cross-regional collaboration among Pacific researchers, scholars, practitioners, and knowledge holders.
- Facilitating opportunities for cross-country learning, knowledge sharing, and exchange across the Pacific region.
- Developing and maintaining strategic partnerships with universities, research institutes, community organizations, professional bodies, and regional and international organizations.
- Supporting PF participation in relevant Pacific, regional, and international conferences, forums, and scientific networks.

Outreach, Communication, and Visibility

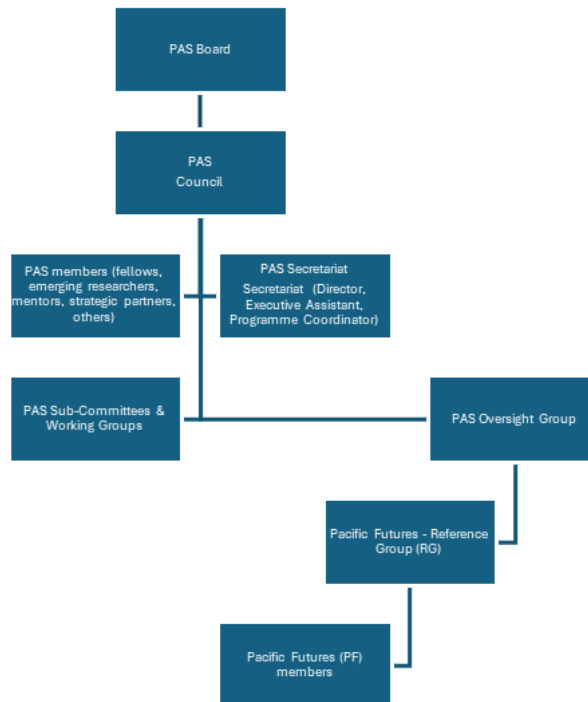
- Promoting the achievements, contributions, and impact of PF members through PAS communication platforms and other appropriate channels.
- Supporting science communication, public engagement, and outreach activities that increase the visibility and accessibility of Pacific scholarship and research.
- Communicating PF milestones, achievements, and activities to PAS, PF members, and key stakeholders.

Governance and Accountability

- Reporting on the implementation and outcomes of the PF Strategic Plan and Annual Costed Workplan.
- Monitoring progress against agreed priorities, deliverables, and performance indicators.
- Seeking funding and resource opportunities to support PF initiatives, where appropriate
- Providing advice and recommendations to the PAS Council on matters relevant to emerging Pacific researchers and scientific communities.
- Undertaking any other responsibilities or activities as requested by the PAS Council and consistent with the objectives of the PF.

5. Governance arrangements

The diagram below outlines the governance arrangements for the PAS and the PF.



The PF operates under the strategic oversight of the PAS Council while maintaining delegated responsibility for implementing the PAS Council's approved strategic priorities and annual activities.

The PAS Council provides mentorship, strategic guidance, and institutional linkage between the PF and PAS governance structures.

Major strategic decisions, public statements, and externally funded initiatives may require the PAS Council's endorsement.

6. Membership of the Reference Group

Membership

The RG will comprise 5, 7, or 9 members, nominated by and from the wider PF membership to provide strategic leadership and oversight of the PF.

In appointing members to the RG, consideration should be given to achieving diverse and balanced representation across:

- Pacific regions, including Polynesia, Melanesia, Micronesia, and the wider Pacific diaspora
- Scientific disciplines, areas of expertise, and knowledge systems
- Public, private, community, and non-government sectors
- Gender and other diversity dimensions
- Career stages, including emerging, early- and mid-career researchers

- Post-graduate (e.g., Master's and Doctoral candidates) students, where appropriate

The composition of the RG should reflect the diversity of Pacific peoples, experiences, knowledge systems, and scientific communities, while ensuring the skills and expertise needed to advance the PF's objectives.

Co-Chairs

The PF will be led by two Co-Chairs who will provide strategic leadership, governance oversight, and representation for the PF and the RG. At least one of the Chair will reside in the Pacific full time.

The Co-Chair will be elected by the members of the RG following the RG's appointment.

The Co-Chairs will generally serve a two-year term, and may remain as RG members for an additional year to support continuity, succession planning, and knowledge transfer.

Succession and Appointments

The process and timeline for the appointment of the Co-Chairs and RG members, including induction, succession planning, and transition arrangements, will be developed by the RG and endorsed by the PAS Council Oversight Group.

RG members are expected to actively serve a two-year term. RG members who are unable to fulfil their responsibilities, resign, or fail to participate in RG activities over an extended period may be replaced through a process determined by the RG and endorsed by the PAS Council Oversight Group.

To support continuity, effective leadership transitions, and organizational sustainability, incoming members may be appointed and inducted during the final six months of an incumbent member's term.

This transition period will support mentoring, knowledge transfer, handover, and familiarization with the PF Strategic Plan, Annual Costed Workplan, governance arrangements, and ongoing activities.

7. Roles and Responsibilities

Co-Chairs' shared responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

- Providing strategic leadership and direction for the PF and RG.
- Leading the development, implementation, monitoring, and review of the PF Strategic Plan and Annual Costed Workplan.

- Ensuring that PF priorities, activities, and initiatives remain aligned with the vision, mission, values, and strategic priorities of the PAS.
- Promoting inclusive, culturally grounded, and ethically informed governance practices.
- Representing the PF at PAS Council meetings, regional and international forums, conferences, and other relevant engagements.
- Acting as the primary liaison between the PF, PAS Council, PAS Secretariat, partner organizations, stakeholders, donors, and development partners.
- Facilitating collaboration, partnership development, and engagement across the Pacific scientific community.
- Convening and facilitating RG and PF meetings, including coordinating meeting schedules, agendas, and overseeing the effective operation of subcommittees.
- Coordinating the implementation of PF priorities, activities, events, and initiatives.
- Providing formal communications and responding to external requests on behalf of the PF and RG, where appropriate.
- Supporting the induction and development of RG members.
- Liaising regularly with the PAS Secretariat regarding reporting, operational matters, and implementation activities.

RG member responsibilities include, but are not limited to

- Contributing to the development, implementation, monitoring, and review of the PF Strategic Plan and Annual Costed Workplan.
- Participating actively in RG meetings, PF meetings, and subcommittee activities.
- Leading or participating in at least one subcommittee and contributing to the implementation of its priorities and workplan.
- Supporting the planning, coordination, and delivery of PF activities, events, workshops, webinars, conferences, and engagement initiatives.
- Representing the PF and acting as ambassadors within their countries, institutions, sectors, and professional networks.
- Building and maintaining relationships with PF members, PAS members, partner organizations, donors, development partners, and key stakeholders.
- Promoting Indigenous and local knowledge systems, ethical research practices, and community engagement principles through PF activities and initiatives.
- Supporting mentorship, networking, leadership development, and capacity-building opportunities for emerging Pacific researchers, practitioners, and knowledge holders.
- Contributing to partnership development, fundraising, and resource mobilization opportunities where appropriate.

- Supporting communications, outreach, social media engagement, and the dissemination of PF outputs, achievements, and activities through academic, professional, community, and digital platforms.

PAS Council Oversight Group

- A small group of eminent, not-so-young scholars from the PAS Fellows will be designated as a Governance/Advisory Body. This group will provide strategic guidance, institutional linkage, and mentorship to the PF Reference Group.
- Updating the RG on relevant Council activities as appropriate
- Communicating to Council PF perspectives

PAS Secretariat

- Provide guidance and support to the RG as appropriate, through a dedicated resource (PAS Program Coordinator)
- Promote and assist with connecting RG members with other organizations and/or members of PAS as appropriate
- Assistance with organization/coordination of PF events
- Regular participation in RG and PF meetings

8. Meetings and Decision-Making

RG Meetings

The RG will meet regularly to provide strategic leadership, governance oversight, and implementation support for the PF.

- During the establishment phase, the RG may meet weekly. Once established, meetings will generally occur fortnightly or monthly at a regularly scheduled day and time.
- Meetings will normally be held virtually unless otherwise agreed by the RG.
- Additional meetings may be convened as required to progress specific priorities, projects, or activities.
- The Chair is responsible for convening and facilitating meetings, and for ensuring that agendas and supporting documentation are circulated in advance, where practicable.
- RG members are expected to review meeting materials, contribute agenda items where appropriate, and provide updates on relevant activities and subcommittee work.
- Responsibility for recording meeting minutes and actions may be shared among RG members, with key decisions, actions, and responsibilities clearly documented.
- Decisions will be carried by a simple majority of members present and voting.
- A quorum shall consist of more than half of the appointed RG members (i.e., 3 of 5 members, 4 of 7 members, or 5 of 9 members). Where a quorum is not present, the meeting may proceed with discussion, information sharing,

planning, and document development. However, formal decisions and approvals must be deferred until a quorum is reached or until an agreed-upon out-of-session process is completed.

- In the event of a tied vote, the Chair will have a casting vote.
- Where urgent decisions are required between meetings, the Chair may seek feedback or endorsement from RG members through electronic communication (e.g., email). Any decisions made out of session will be formally recorded and noted at the next RG meeting.

PF Meetings

The PF will meet monthly, quarterly, or as required for a 1.5-hour video conference call to support member engagement, information sharing, collaboration, networking, and updates on PF activities and priorities.

- PF meetings may be convened by the Chair or delegated to another RG member.
- Responsibility for facilitating PF meetings may be shared among RG members.
- PF meetings will provide opportunities for members to receive updates on the implementation of the PF Strategic Plan and Annual Costed Workplan, contribute ideas and feedback, share achievements, and engage in professional, scientific, and community discussions.
- Additional meetings, webinars, workshops, and engagement activities may be organized throughout the year to support the PF's objectives and priorities.
- Responsibility for recording meeting minutes and actions may be shared among RG members, with key decisions, actions, and recommendations clearly documented.

Meeting schedules should recognize the geographical spread of PF members across the Pacific region and, wherever practicable, accommodate different time zones and members' commitments.

9. Conflict of Interest

RG members must declare any actual, potential, or perceived conflicts of interest relating to PF matters. Members may be required to abstain from relevant discussions or decisions where conflicts arise.

Members are expected to maintain confidentiality where appropriate and act in the best interests of the PF and the PAS.

10. Reporting and Accountability

The RG will provide regular updates to the PAS Council on progress regarding its Strategic Plan and Annual Costed Workplan.

Reporting will support accountability, transparency, continuous improvement, and alignment with the PAS's vision, mission, values, and strategic priorities.

Reporting may include, but is not limited to:

- Membership growth, diversity, and regional representation.
- Mentorship, leadership development, and capacity-building outcomes.
- Outreach, engagement, and networking activities.
- Research collaborations, partnerships, and knowledge-sharing initiatives.
- Funding secured, resource mobilization activities, and project implementation progress.
- Policy contributions, advisory engagements, and evidence-informed advocacy activities.
- Public science communication outputs, engagement activities, and audience reach.
- Participation in regional and international scientific forums and events.
- Impact stories and case studies demonstrating benefits and outcomes for Pacific peoples and communities.
- Progress against strategic priorities, annual workplan objectives, and key deliverables.

The RG may provide annual reports, progress updates, or other reports as requested by the PAS Council Oversight Group or the PAS Council.

11. Review Terms of Reference

The ToR will be reviewed every six months and after every two years to ensure continued alignment with the strategic direction, values, and priorities of the PAS and the evolving needs of the PF.

The review will be led by the RG and endorsed by the PAS Council Oversight Group.

Where appropriate, the review process may include consultation with PF members, the PAS Council, Indigenous and local knowledge holders, community representatives, and relevant regional partners to ensure the PF remains responsive to emerging Pacific priorities, opportunities, and challenges.

Any proposed amendments to the ToR will be submitted to the PAS Council Oversight Group for consideration and endorsement.