



**CATALYST  
FUND**  
STRATEGIC

Catalyst: Strategic  
New Zealand-China Strategic Research Alliance

# Assessment Guidelines

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2020/2021 Investment round

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MINISTRY OF BUSINESS,  
INNOVATION & EMPLOYMENT  
HĪKINA WHAKATUTUKI

New Zealand Government

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# Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to assess proposals from the 2020/2021 *Catalyst: Strategic* New Zealand-China Strategic Research Alliance (SRA) investment round.

The Catalyst: Strategic Investment fund is managed by the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE). It aims to support activities that initiate, develop and foster collaborations leveraging international science and innovation for New Zealand's benefit. As an assessor, you are critical in helping MBIE identify proposals that have the greatest potential to deliver on the New Zealand government's investment goals.

The Catalyst: Strategic Investment fund seeks to achieve the following outcomes:

- Targeted international partnerships to maximise the impact and quality of New Zealand science and innovation;
- Emerging international science cooperation opportunities are pursued and advanced to deliver benefits to New Zealand; and
- International science and innovation is leveraged in key areas, delivering benefits to New Zealand at a faster pace, of better quality or of greater impact than can otherwise be achieved.

Informed assessment of proposals is a critical aspect of MBIE's investment process, as it forms the basis of MBIE's funding recommendations. We have selected you and other Assessors based on your knowledge and experience. You have not been selected as a 'representative' of a particular organisation or sector.

These guidelines detail what will be involved in the assessment of the proposals and the role that you and others will play in that process. We recommend that you read this document in conjunction with the New Zealand-China SRA Call for Proposals (attached as a separate document) and other relevant information at <https://www.mbie.govt.nz/science-and-technology/science-and-innovation/funding-information-and-opportunities/investment-funds/catalyst-fund/>.

Please note: MBIE may publish your name, your affiliated organisations and your involvement in this process (as an assessor) on the website linked above.

If you have any questions, feel free to contact us.

**Assessment queries:** [internationalscience@mbie.govt.nz](mailto:internationalscience@mbie.govt.nz)

**Portal queries:** [imssupport@mbie.govt.nz](mailto:imssupport@mbie.govt.nz)

**Phone** 0800 693 778 (Monday to Friday, 8:30am to 4:30pm NZ time)

# The NZ-China SRA Programme

MBIE has invited proposals under *Catalyst: Strategic*. Up to \$600,000 in total over three years (2020/21 to 2023/24) is available in *Catalyst: Strategic* for investment in **joint research partnerships between New Zealand and the People’s Republic of China that cannot be supported through existing funding.**

MBIE seeks to invest up to \$300,000 (excluding GST) over three years to fund up to two joint research projects, one each in the agreed bilateral priority areas of Food Science and Environmental Science. Up to \$100,000 (excluding GST) per year for a maximum of three years is available to each successful proposal.

This *Catalyst: Strategic* funding round is a bilateral initiative funded by MBIE and China’s Ministry of Science and Technology (MoST). MBIE and MOST have jointly invested in this programme on a continuing basis since 2010 through coordinated annual funding rounds, supporting the New Zealand and Chinese project teams respectively.

All proposed projects must align with the objective of **developing enduring science and innovation collaboration** partnerships with world-class Chinese counterparts. Activities must significantly broaden and deepen collaborative research partnerships between China and New Zealand.

Proposals which also involve world class partners from other countries will be accepted, where these demonstrate the potential for increased excellence and impact beyond what is achievable through a New Zealand and Chinese partnership alone. Proposals which involve private sector partners are also eligible.

Collaborative projects should **reflect and support relevant Government strategies and initiatives**, to which science and innovation can make a major contribution. Such strategies include, but are not limited to, the National Statement of Science Investment, National Science Challenges, and Vision Mātauranga.

A separate Call and subsequent assessment process will be administered by the Health Research Council (HRC) on behalf of MBIE in the third priority area: Health and Biomedical Science.

## Investment priorities

<b>Food Science</b>	<b>Funding available per project: \$300,000 total excluding GST</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Animal and plant biotechnology</li><li>• Alternative proteins</li><li>• Biological hazards</li><li>• Chemical hazards</li><li>• Labelling and consumer information</li><li>• Production, processing and handling</li></ul>	
<b>Environmental Science</b>	<b>Funding available per project: \$300,000 total excluding GST</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Clean and renewable energy</li><li>• Climate change</li><li>• Biodiversity</li><li>• Water research (including ocean research)</li><li>• Natural hazards</li><li>• Pollution on land and sea</li></ul>	

# Assessment Roles and Responsibilities

The following outlines the key roles and responsibilities involved in the assessment of 2020/2021 New Zealand-China SRA investment round. The Assessment Panel advises MBIE on the quality of the proposals and does not have delegated authority to make funding decisions.

## Assessor

Your role as an Assessor is to assess a selection of proposals submitted for funding from the 2020/2021 New Zealand-China SRA investment round.

Your key responsibilities include:

- Participating in an Assessor briefing.
- Declaring any conflicts of interest and adhering to MBIE's confidentiality and privacy policies.
- Reading and assessing assigned proposals, allocating assessment scores that reflect your assessments (*using a 7-point scoring system against the assessment criteria*) and then recording your scores and supporting comments in MBIE's Investment Management System (IMS) – a secure online portal.
- Being available for an Assessment Panel meeting via teleconference, where the preliminary scores and comments are reviewed, scored and ranked, and advise on the assessment results in recorded by MBIE.

## Assessment Panel Chair (non-scoring)

The Chair must:

- Prioritise the discussion of the Panel meeting taking into account the preliminary ranked assessment scores and any advice from Assessors.
- Identify and take appropriate action over conflicts of interest.
- Allow time for informed discussion and equitable decision-making for proposals and mediate views if required.
- Ensure that the Assessment Panel follows the scoring system and provides sound advice.
- Ensure that the Assessment Panel develops appropriate commentary on proposals to inform funding recommendations and to enable appropriate feedback to Applicants.
- Provide a panel report to MBIE.

## Confidentiality and privacy

All Assessors must agree to adhere to MBIE's confidentiality and privacy policies which apply to all personal information collected by MBIE in the IMS portal before they can view their assigned proposals.

To ensure confidentiality, as an Assessor you must:

- Ensure the safekeeping of all proposals and related documents (*e.g. workbooks, notes, etc.*).
- Destroy any remaining documentation or return it to MBIE at the end of the assessment process.
- Not correspond with or discuss the contents or assessment of any proposal with the Applicant or any other party. If an Applicant contacts you about a proposal:
  - direct them to MBIE ([internationalscience@mbie.govt.nz](mailto:internationalscience@mbie.govt.nz)) and
  - email MBIE with the details of your contact.
- Not use any confidential information for any purpose other than assessment.

## Official Information Act 1982

Proposals and their assessments are confidential; your assessment comments will not be released to applicants. However, please note that MBIE is subject to the Official Information Act 1982 and therefore information relating to an assessment may be released if requested. We will consult with you before releasing any information about you or information that you have provided to us.

## Conflicts of interest

MBIE follows a rigorous process to maintain the credibility of investment decisions and to assure Applicants that their proposals are fairly and reasonably appraised.

Before beginning assessment(s), you must check your list of assigned proposals in IMS for any conflicts of interest and either accept or decline the assignments as appropriate.

### What is considered a conflict of interest?

Conflicts of interest may occur on two levels; direct and indirect.

- A **direct** conflict of interest would be deemed if you are:
  - directly involved with a proposal (*as a participant, manager, mentor, or partner*) or you have a close personal relationship with the Applicant, e.g. family members
  - a collaborator or in some other way involved with an Applicant's work programme.
- An **indirect** conflict of interest would be deemed if you:
  - are employed by an organisation involved in a proposal but you are not part of the Applicant's work programme
  - have a personal and/or professional relationship with one of the Applicants, e.g. an acquaintance
  - have or had involvement with a proposal that is in direct competition with a proposal being assessed or where the impacts proposed by a proposal under discussion may compete with your personal business interests.

### Reporting identified conflicts of interest

#### All conflicts of interest must be declared to MBIE.

If you identify a clear and direct conflict with a proposal that has been assigned to you, you must decline the assignment.

If you identify an indirect conflict (or you are unsure if you have a conflict of interest), email MBIE at [internationalscience@mbie.govt.nz](mailto:internationalscience@mbie.govt.nz) with the details for further discussion before accepting or declining the assignment.

### Handling conflicts of interest during the Assessment Panel meeting

If there is a **direct conflict** of interest with a Proposal about to be discussed during the Panel meeting, declare the conflict to the Chair. You will be required to leave the room during the ensuing assessment discussion.

The actions required for a declared **indirect conflict** of interest is the discretion of the Assessment Panel chair; this could be to:

- leave the room
- stay but remain silent unless asked to respond to a direct question
- contribute to the assessment of the proposal.

Should the Chair declare a conflict of interest with a proposal, a Deputy Chair will be appointed for the ensuing assessment discussion.

All conflict of interest declarations and resulting Assessor actions during the Panel meeting will be recorded.

# The Assessment Process

## Assessment Panel

1. MBIE reviews applications to ensure they meet the eligibility criteria.
2. MBIE assigns eligible proposals to assessment panel members for individual assessment.
3. Each proposal is individually assessed – scores and assessment comments are entered into the MBIE Portal.
4. Assessor scores and comments form a recommendation to MBIE as to which proposals demonstrate excellence and merit being funded.
5. MoST conducts a parallel assessment process for Chinese applicants.
6. China and New Zealand will compare rankings to agree funding (where proposals have been ranked differently, MoST and MBIE will negotiate in order to agree which teams receive funding).

## Key Dates (all dates are New Zealand Standard Time)

Assessor Briefing	15-19 February 2021
Proposals assigned	22 February 2021
Assessment recorded in the IMS portal	21 March 2021
Food Science and Environmental Science Assessment Panel meetings (separate)	8 and 9 April 2021

## Time Commitment

We envisage your involvement in the assessment process to be as follows.

Up to:	To:
Half a day	Read through these guidelines and background documents., and participate in an Assessor Briefing via videoconference or in person
1-2 hours per proposal (est. 2 days)	Read your assigned proposals, assign scores and enter those scores with comments in the IMS portal.
1-2 days	Attend the Assessment Panel meeting via videoconference or in person

## Assessor Training

Prior to performing assessments, Assessors must attend a one hour briefing session in person or via videoconference. The purpose of this session is to familiarise Assessors with the:

- Tools and resources that are available to them including the online scoring system
- Content of the Call for Proposals including the structure of the application form and the assessment criteria

Information about this briefing will be sent to attendees separately.

## Accessing proposals

All proposals that meet the eligibility criteria will be assigned to Assessors for review.

MBIE will email you to confirm your role and inform you that the proposals have been assigned to you and are ready for review.

To access the proposals assigned to you:

1. Log on to MBIE's IMS portal and view your assignments, identify and notify MBIE of any conflicts of interest and then accept or decline your assignments accordingly.
2. Open (*download and/or print*) all assigned, accepted proposals.

## Recording assessments

Your assessment scores, comments, and feedback are recorded in the IMS portal; this must occur before **5pm, 21 March 2021 (NZ time)**.

## The Assessment Panel meeting

The Assessment Panel will convene via videoconference to discuss the preliminary ranked assessment scores and supporting comments.

The Panel Chair will introduce each proposal at the meeting. The Assessment Panel members present their rationale for their scoring and any comments they have. The entire Panel then discusses the proposal and preliminary scoring to arrive at a consensus score.

MBIE records the discussion, the consensus scores, and the Panel's recommendations.

## Recommendations and funding decisions

The Panel Chair will provide MBIE with a recommendation report on whether the proposals should be funded and suggestions as to how the proposals could be further improved. MBIE will then review the report and provide a summarised version to applicants.

The final funding decision will be made following the conclusion of the second assessment stage. When making its decision, MBIE will take into account:

- **Excellence:** Will the activity lead to the creation of new knowledge through high quality research?
- **Connections:** Will the proposed activity establish an enduring collaboration with world class international collaborators?
- **Impact:** Will the project deliver benefit aligned to wider economic, social and environmental goals of New Zealand?

The final decision on the allocation of funding will be made by the General Manager, Science, Innovation and International.

# Developing your assessments

Use the following procedure to assess proposals.

## The Assessment Steps

### 1. Read and understand the assessment criteria and the objectives and outcomes of the 2020/2021 Catalyst: Strategic NZ-China SRA contestable investment round.

Read and understand the assessment criteria detailed in these guidelines. The scoring guide and the points to note for each assessment criteria provide a common interpretation to clarify and help ensure consistency in application and understanding.

### 2. Accept (or Decline) assigned proposals.

Accept your assigned proposals in IMS or decline if you deem a conflict of interest exists.

### 3. Read assigned proposals.

### 4. Select an assessment score, and record associated commentary.

Only assess the information presented in the proposal. Applicants are obliged to present the relevant information therefore if a proposal has obvious gaps, reflect this in your score and detail the significant issues in your comments.

Independently score each proposal using the assessment criteria (*see pages 10-12*). For each criterion, select a score ranging from 1 (*low quality*) to 7 (*high quality*) from the scoring grid that best matches your assessment AND how well the proposal would deliver on the objectives and outcomes of the 2020 New Zealand-China SRA investment round.

While certain sections of proposals specifically align with the assessment criteria, evaluate the proposal as a whole before finalising your assessment.

Record your assessment scores in the IMS portal and comment on why you selected those scores. Your comments should also identify if applicable the specific reasons for a deficiency, particularly if you are recording a score of 4 or less.

You should provide overall feedback on the proposal and suggest improvements for a revised proposal that will be assessed in the second stage of this investment process.

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Ensure that your comments are accurate, professional, honest, and correlate to the score and description associated with the scoring guide. Be mindful that:

- if requested to do so, your assessments may be made available under the Official Information Act.
- word limits for comments may apply; if so, these clearly display bottom right of each Comment field in the IMS portal.

Exercise your knowledge, judgement and expertise to reach clear and soundly based assessments that are fair, objective and evidence-based.

Be wary of 'drift' in your scoring. It is common for scoring to change as Assessors gain experience with the assessment process. From our previous experience, assessors will often score the first proposal they review higher than if they reviewed that proposal towards the end of their assessments. You may want to review your scores and comments for all three proposals before submission to ensure that your scoring has not drifted.

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### 5. Destroy (or return to MBIE) all proposals and supporting documentation when the assessment process is complete.

## The Assessment Criteria and Scoring Guide

Before beginning your assessments, read and understand the assessment criteria and use the scoring guide on the following page to help form your assessment and determine a score.

The scoring guide and the points to note for each assessment criteria provide a common interpretation that aims to clarify and help ensure consistency in both application and understanding.

When conducting your assessments, exercise your knowledge, judgement and expertise to reach clear and soundly based decisions that are fair, objective and evidence-based.

### The Assessment Criteria

Assessment Criteria	Weighting
<b>Excellence</b> Will the activity lead to the creation of new knowledge through high quality research?	40%
<b>Connections</b> Will the proposed activity establish an enduring collaboration with world class international collaborators?	30%
<b>Impact</b> Will the project deliver benefit aligned to wider economic, social, and environmental goals of New Zealand?	30%

### Other assessment criteria

When assessing proposals against the assessment criteria, MBIE will also take the following factors into account, including the extent to which the overall mix of investments:

- are likely to achieve the objectives of this Call and Catalyst: Strategic (see What is Catalyst?)
- are likely to unlock the science and innovation potential of Māori knowledge, resources, and people for the benefit of New Zealand in accordance with the aim of the Vision Mātauranga policy
- will ensure that funding is not concurrently provided in respect of any two or more programmes of research, science, technology or related activities that are the same or similar (whether those proposals are part of a new proposal, or are already being funded), and
- will minimise the risk that an applicant will not be able to undertake the relevant programme of research, science or technology, or related activities because the applicant or any person involved in delivering the programme, would concurrently be committed to one or more other programmes (whether those proposals are part of a new proposal, or are already being funded).

## The Catalyst: Strategic Assessment Scoring Guide

Score	1 (Poor)	2	3	4	5	6	7 (Excellent)
Key Words	Missing Irrelevant No potential No credibility	Minimal Low relevance Little potential Little credibility	Some Partially relevant Some potential Some credibility	Most Generally relevant General potential Generally credible	Substantial Relevant Good potential Credible	Comprehensive Very relevant Strong potential Very credible	Complete Highly relevant Excellent potential Highly credible
High Level Description	Content is missing, irrelevant or has no potential to deliver a high quality research programme	Many aspects are missing, have low relevance, or have little potential	Many aspects are adequately met, but some gaps or deficiencies	All aspects are met to a generally adequate level	All aspects are effectively met, some strongly met	All aspects are strongly met, with some met at an excellent level.	All aspects are convincingly met in an innovative, relevant, and highly credible manner

# Viewing assigned proposals and recording assessments

This section details how to access the proposals assigned to you for assessment and how to record your assessment. Both of these actions are performed in MBIE's IMS portal.

## Accessing the IMS portal

To access the portal you require:

- Chrome or Firefox
- Your MBIE IMS portal Username and Password.

### ■ To log in to the IMS portal:

#### For first time Assessors:

1. You will receive an email containing your portal username and a temporary password. Click the portal link in this email. The IMS portal's access agreement displays. This agreement details the terms and conditions governing the use of the portal.

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Your temporary password will expire in 72 hours and can only be used once.  
The access agreement will only appear once, the first time you log in.

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2. Read and accept this agreement. Once accepted, an **Edit password** screen displays.
3. Following the on screen prompts, enter your temporary password and then enter a new permanent one.
4. Click the **Save Changes** button. The portal's **Home** screen displays.

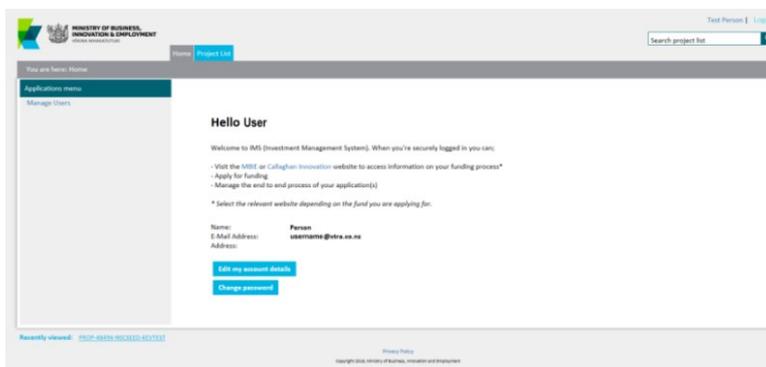
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Five or more failed log in attempts will automatically lock you out of the system. If this occurs, contact the Investment Operations Team and ask for your account to be unlocked at [imssupport@mbie.govt.nz](mailto:imssupport@mbie.govt.nz)

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For portal support, contact MBIE's Investment Operations Team Monday to Friday between 8.30am and 4.30pm:

- email [imssupport@mbie.govt.nz](mailto:imssupport@mbie.govt.nz)
- call 0800 693 778



The Home page of the MBIE IMS portal

#### For existing Assessors:

1. Click the **MBIE IMS Portal** link ([ims.msi.govt.nz/](https://ims.msi.govt.nz/)).
2. Type your Username and Password.
3. Click the **Login Securely** button. The portal's **Home** screen displays.

### ■ To log out of the portal:

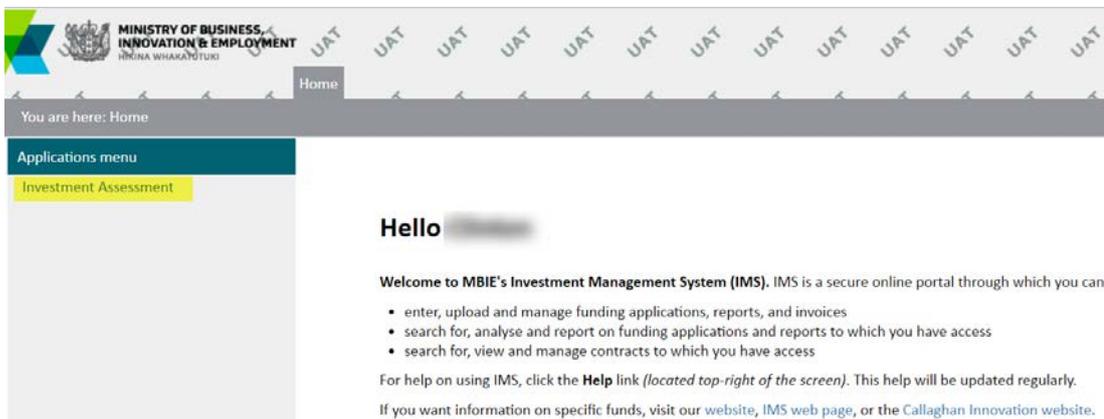
4. Do one of the following:
  - Click the **Logout** hyperlink (located top right of the **Home** screen).
  - Or click the  (where UN is your initials) located top right of assessment **Scoring** page.

## Accepting/declining assigned proposals

2021 NZ-China SRA Investment Round research proposals will be available for review on **22 February 2021**.

### ■ To accept (or decline) an assignment:

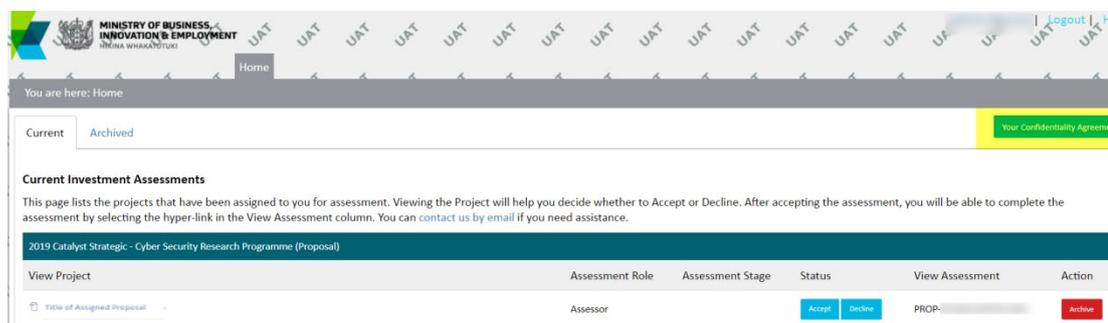
1. On the **Home** tab, click the **Investment Assessment** link > **Current** tab.



2. Read and accept the confidentiality agreement. This agreement details the terms and conditions governing the assessment process.

This agreement will only display to first time Assessors when they first access their list of assignments. You can revisit this agreement at any stage by clicking the **Your Confidentiality Agreement** button located top right of the **Investment Assessment** link > **Current** tab.

Once accepted, the list of all proposals assigned to you displays.



3. Scroll down the list to see your assignments.

The 2020/2021 NZ-China SRA investment proposals assigned to you are listed under the **View Project** column, grouped by investment process. If you have performed assessments in the past, your new assignments will be at the top of the list under the heading **2020 NZ-China SRA Investment Round**.

4. For the first proposal listed, click the link under **View Project**. A summary of the proposal opens in a new browser tab.

The screenshot shows the MBIE UAT interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the MBIE logo and the text 'MINISTRY OF BUSINESS, INNOVATION & EMPLOYMENT' and 'MĀHĀNA WHAKANGATURI'. Below this is a breadcrumb trail 'You are here: Home'. The main content area has two tabs: 'Current' (selected) and 'Archived'. Under the 'Current' tab, the heading is 'Current Investment Assessments'. Below the heading is a paragraph: 'This page lists the projects that have been assigned to you for assessment. Viewing the Project will help you decide whether to Accept or Decline. After accepting the assessment by selecting the hyper-link in the View Assessment column. You can contact us by email if you need assistance.' Below this is a table with the following structure:

2019 Catalyst Strategic - Cyber Security Research Programme (Proposal)			
View Project	Assessment Role	Assessment Stage	Status
Title of Assigned Proposal	Assessor		Accept Decline

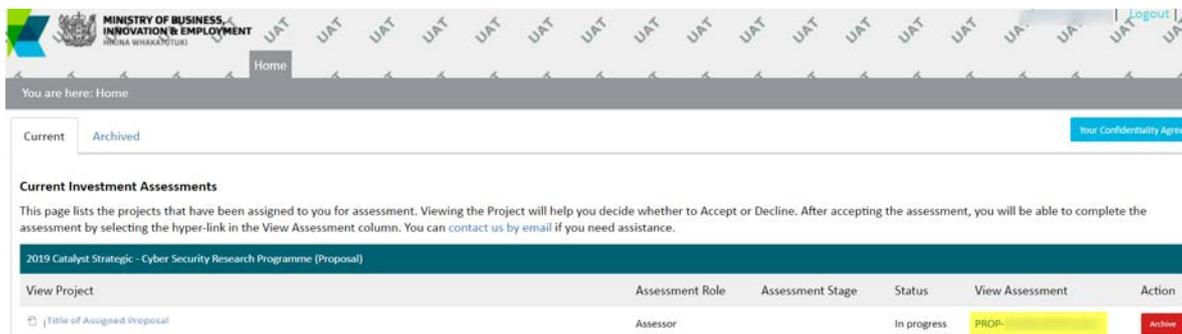
5. After reading the proposal summary, if:
- You deem a **direct conflict of interest** exists:
    1. Go back to the previous browser tab displaying the list of assignments.
    2. Click the **Decline** button adjacent to the proposal.
    3. In the resulting dialog, enter the reason and click the **Save** button.  
The declined proposal is automatically removed from your assigned list.
    4. Close the browser tab displaying the proposal's summary.
  - You deem an **indirect conflict of interest** exists, close the proposal's browser tab displaying the proposal's summary and email MBIE at [internationalscience@mbie.govt.nz](mailto:internationalscience@mbie.govt.nz) to discuss further.
  - There is **no conflict of interest**, close the summary and click the **Accept** button adjacent to the proposal. The proposal's status will be changed to **In progress**.
6. Repeat the above steps for all three of the proposals assigned to you.

## Recording assessments

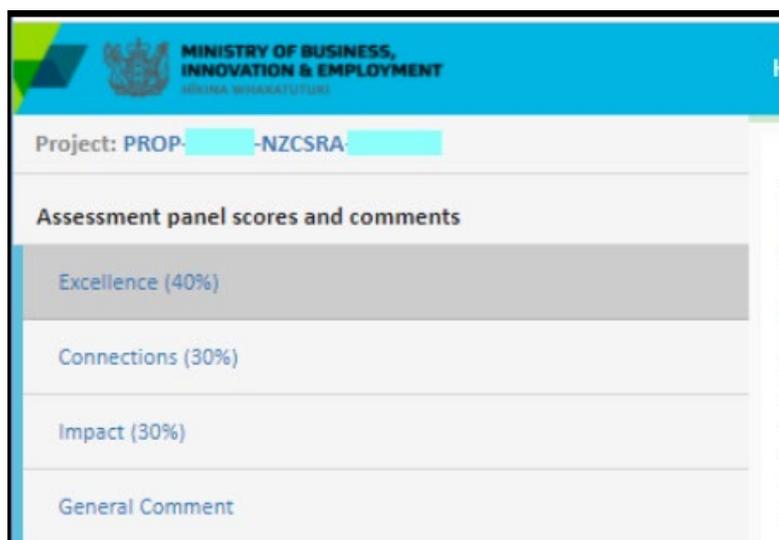
Your assessments are due before **5pm, 21 March 2021 (NZ time)**.

### ■ To record your assessments:

7. Access the **Home** tab > **Investment Assessment** page > **Current** tab.
8. Click a proposal's **View Assessment** link. A **Scoring** page opens in a separate browser tab.



9. Enter your assessment scores and comments **into the relevant fields**. The areas you are required to respond to are detailed in the **Navigation** panel on the left hand side of the screen. You can either scroll down the page to view and enter all fields or click on a link in the panel for direct access.



Ensure that your comments are accurate, professional, honest, and correlate to the score and description associated with the scoring guide. Do not include names and be mindful that:

- if requested to do so, they may be made available under the Official Information Act.
- word limits for comments may apply; these are displayed on the bottom right of each **Comment** field.

Respond only to what you have been asked to assess.

You can view and print the proposal by clicking the printer icon next to the proposal number at the top left of the **Navigation** panel.

You **must**:

- ensure the safe keeping of all proposals and related documents, e.g. workbooks, notes, etc. during the assessment process.
- destroy all saved/printed proposals once the assessment process is complete.

10. When your assessment is complete (you have recorded your assessment rating and comment(s) into all of the fields), click the **Submit** button (top right of the screen).
11. A summary dialog displays with your assessment. If your recorded answers are satisfactory to you, click the **Submit** button. If not, click the **Back** button to return to the **Scoring** page and modify your assessment.

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The **Submit** button is not active until all fields are complete.  
Once submitted, the proposal is automatically assigned the status **Submitted**.

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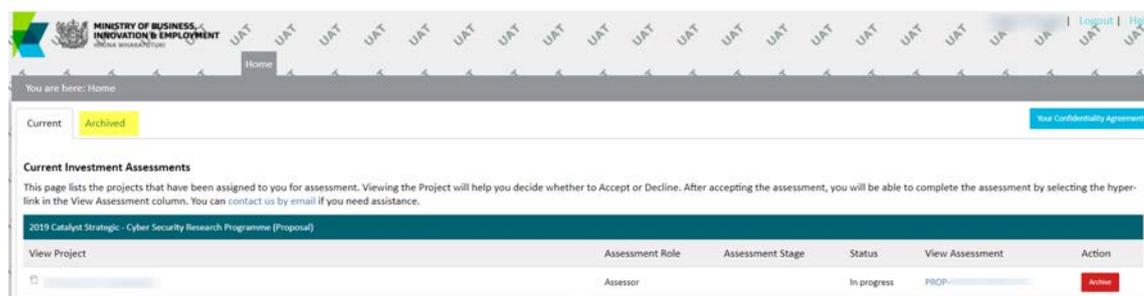
12. Close the browser tab displaying the **Scoring** page and return to the tab displaying your list of assignments.

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You may need to refresh the browser page to display the change in status.

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13. For the proposal you have just scored, click the **Archive** button. The proposal is automatically removed from your list of assignments.




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View all archived assignments on the **Archived** tab. You can retrieve the proposal at any stage by clicking the **Unarchive** button.  
Remember to destroy all saved/printed proposals after the assessment process is completed.

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## Checking the status of your assessments

You can check the completeness of your assessment of a proposal in the left hand Navigation panel.

The coloured bar	Indicates you have...
	recorded a response
	yet to respond

You can also click the mouse at the top of the Scoring page to view a Progress bar.

## Updating your IMS portal details

From the **Home** screen in the IMS portal, you can maintain your details as and when required.

■ **To view and/or update your details:**

14. Click the **Edit my account** details button on the **Home** tab.
15. Update your details as required and click **Save**.

■ **To change your password:**

16. Click the **Change password** button on the **Home** tab.
17. Enter your new password and click **Save**.

You can also access these details by clicking the  button (*where UN is your initials*) located top right of assessment scoring pages.

## Further Information

**Email:** Proposal queries: [internationalscience@mbie.govt.nz](mailto:internationalscience@mbie.govt.nz)  
Portal queries: [imssupport@mbie.govt.nz](mailto:imssupport@mbie.govt.nz)

**Phone:** Portal queries: 0800 693 778 (Monday to Friday, 8.30am-4.30pm NZ time)

You can also [subscribe](#) to MBIE's Alert e-newsletter.

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