Research has become core ‘business’ of the university sector in New Zealand as central government allocates public funding to tertiary institutions according to the Performance Based Research Fund (PBRF). The quantity, quality and relevance of knowledge production, measured by research output, is a strategic attempt by the government to achieve its aim that “…New Zealand is a high income, knowledge-based economy, which is innovative, creative, and which provides a unique quality of life to all New Zealanders.” (Tertiary Education Commission, 2007, p. 8). Government research training or postgraduate research policies have been reformulated in an attempt to ensure this aim is achieved and sustained through the work of future researchers. Consequently, 25 percent of the PBRF is dependant on the quantity of masters and doctoral research completions.

This funding model has generated tensions among institutional strategies, policies and procedures designed to simultaneously increase the quantity of research completed by both academic staff and postgraduate students; reduce the time taken to complete research; and maintain desirable qualities in terms of research processes, research outputs and researchers. These expectations have placed increasing pressures on faculties, schools, departments, disciplines, supervisors, postgraduate researchers, academic advisors and support staff.

This paper briefly discusses some of the government and institutional policies, procedures and funding models driving the landscape of postgraduate research in New Zealand. It then considers the practises and experiences of supervisors, postgraduate researchers, academic support staff and employers operating within this ‘business’ model of knowledge production.