



Jenn Bestwick
Chair
Tertiary Education Commission
PO Box 27-048
Wellington 6141

Dear Jenn,

Determination of Design of Funding Mechanisms: Centres of Research Excellence

I am writing to advise you of a determination of the design of two funding mechanisms, under section 159L of the Education Act 1989 (the Act), for Centres of Research Excellence (CoREs). These determinations have been varied under section 159OA of the Act.

The varied determinations are set out in the appendix to this letter. These have been made following consultation with the sector about the challenges they face because of COVID-19. The determinations include the following changes:

- i. Extending the date of the current CoREs' determination, to allow for a six month extension of their contracts;
- ii. Extending the contract period from six to six and a half years for all currently contracted CoREs; and
- iii. Delaying the commencement of the new CoREs' determination until 1 July 2021.

Under section 159O of the Act, it is the Commission's responsibility to develop the details needed to implement my determinations for the design of funding mechanisms.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'CH', written over a light blue circular watermark.

Chris Hipkins
Minister of Education

Determination of Design of Funding Mechanism Centres of Research Excellence

Preliminary provisions

Statutory authority

1. This funding mechanism is made under section 159L of the Education Act 1989 (the Act).

Purpose

2. As set out in the attached mission statement, the purpose of a Centre of Research Excellence (CoRE) is to:
 - a. undertake excellent research;
 - b. support the development of world-class researchers in areas of importance to New Zealand's future development; and
 - c. demonstrate academic strength as well as progress towards impacts with public good and/or economic benefits.

Timeframe

3. This funding mechanism is to fund activities from 1 July 2021.
4. The Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) may exercise any of its administrative functions as required to give effect to this funding mechanism at any time.

Available funding

5. The total amount of Government funding that may be allocated under this funding mechanism will be set through the Government's annual Budget processes.

Off-Plan funding

6. The TEC may pay the funding under section 159ZC of the Act (funding other than via a Plan).

Eligibility and selection of CoREs

Eligibility

7. The TEC must only fund a tertiary education institution (TEI), as defined under section 159 of the Act, to host a CoRE.

Selection

8. The TEC must select each CoRE to receive funding through a competitive process determined by the TEC.

9. A TEI may submit an application for selection on behalf of a proposed CoRE. The TEI that submits the application will be the host of that CoRE.
10. To determine whether a CoRE will receive funding, the TEC must apply the following assessment criteria (the assessment criteria must be read in conjunction with the mission statement in the attached Appendix):
 - a. Excellence: excellent research, including:
 - i. academic strength of the proposed research team;
 - ii. academic strength of the proposed research programme;
 - iii. commitment to ensuring research is innovative, outcomes-focussed and has impact
 - iv. strength of proposed collaboration and the degree to which partners have contributed to the proposal;
 - v. potential for the CoRE to have national and international influence; and
 - vi. commitment to equity and wellbeing outcomes, including encouraging and enabling diversity and inclusion for Māori, Pacific peoples, and other under-represented groups in the proposed research programme and/or in the proposed research team.
 - b. Contribution within the tertiary education system, including:
 - i. contribution to the priorities of the Tertiary Education Strategy;
 - ii. contribution to graduate, postgraduate and new researcher education;
 - iii. expected impact on the development of New Zealand's future workforce;
 - iv. contribution to the development of a culture of innovation and wealth creation in New Zealand; and
 - v. commitment to prioritising equity and wellbeing outcomes, including encouraging and enabling diversity and inclusion for Māori, Pacific peoples, and other under-represented groups in teaching activities.
 - c. Contribution to New Zealand's future development, including:
 - i. potential for the research to have public good and/or economic impact in New Zealand;
 - ii. commitment to engagement and exchange with potential stakeholders/ end-users; and
 - iii. strength of the intention to drive the connections that lead to research translation.
 - d. Governance and management, including:
 - i. strength of planned governance and management;
 - ii. clarity and benefits of proposed host and partner contributions; and
 - iii. commitment of parties to proposed collaborative practices.
11. When selecting CoREs to be funded, the TEC will select CoREs that best meet the assessment criteria.
12. The TEC must give the excellence criterion first priority. An application must be considered against this criterion and only go forward in the assessment process if the TEC assesses it as meeting the excellence criterion in paragraph 10 (a).

Selection of a CoRE focused on Māori research

13. The TEC will select at least one CoRE focused on Māori research to be funded through a competitive process determined by the TEC in accordance with the assessment criteria outlined in paragraphs 10-12.

Funding

Period of funding

14. The TEC may fund a selected CoRE for a period of up to eight years.

Use of funding

15. A host TEI may reallocate CoRE funding to collaborative partners for the purpose of carrying out the CoRE's strategic research programme, and other activities that support its strategy.

Conditions on funding

Conditions that must be attached to funding

16. The TEC must attach the following conditions to funding under section 159ZD of the Act:
 - a. The host TEI and the CoRE must ensure that at least 50% of the CoRE's annual funding is used by, or allocated to, tertiary education organisations. The TEC may vary this condition to allow for less than 50% of a CoRE's annual funding to be used by, or allocated to, tertiary education organisations if the TEC is satisfied that it is necessary or appropriate to do so to give effect to the CoRE's research objectives.
 - b. The host TEI and the CoRE must meet the performance and achievements specified in the agreement between the TEC and the host TEI, and in the attached appendix.
 - c. The host TEI must only reallocate CoRE funding to collaborative partners for the purpose of carrying out the CoRE's strategic research programme, and other activities that support its strategy.
 - d. The host TEI and the CoRE must comply with any review undertaken by the TEC in respect of the performance of the CoRE. The review may be directed at any aspect or aspects of the CoRE's performance.

Conditions that may be attached to funding

17. The TEC may impose any other condition on funding that it considers necessary to ensure that a CoRE is adequately accountable to the TEC for the use of funding for the purposes set out in this determination, or otherwise to give effect to this determination.

Appendix

Mission Statement for Centres of Research Excellence

Government's investment intention

It is the intention of the Government that investing in Centres of Research Excellence (CoREs) will support growth in research excellence and the development of world-class researchers in areas of existing excellence that are important to New Zealand's future development.

Mission statement for CoREs

This mission statement sets out high level expectations of CoREs in terms of role, performance and achievements, as well as shared responsibilities of host and partners.

The mission statement will form the basis of selection criteria and ongoing performance monitoring of CoREs.

Research carried out by CoREs

CoRE research must be leading edge research of world-class quality in an area of importance to New Zealand. CoRE research demonstrates academic strength as well as planned and effective progress towards defined impacts with public good and/or economic benefits.

- CoRE research may be basic and/or applied. It is always pioneering, commonly multi-dimensional and/or multi-disciplinary, and likely to involve collaborative and inter-institutional participation and exchange.
- A CoRE will define its area of strategic impact, the need for this focus and the potential benefit for New Zealand. It will regularly revisit and refresh research planning to ensure it is research innovative and solution-focused.
- A CoRE is innovative and responds quickly to opportunity. It allocates funding for excellent research that has next-stage potential impact and is aligned with its strategic direction.
- It is anticipated that, over time, the research and personnel profile of a CoRE will evolve within its area of strategic impact, reflecting the innovative and cutting edge nature of a CoRE's research activities.
- A CoRE commits to equity and wellbeing outcomes, including encouraging and enabling diversity and inclusion in its research activities and/or its research teams(s).
- CoRE expertise can be directed to government science priorities, as appropriate.

CoREs as an element in the tertiary education system

A CoRE builds research capability in areas of existing excellence. It translates new knowledge into teaching and the training of future researchers. It offers specific and novel opportunities for graduate students, emerging and established investigators, across its partner institutions.

- A CoRE plans its contribution to the teaching and learning environment of its partner institutions. It is able to demonstrate its educational outcomes and its contribution to employment outcomes for graduates.
- A CoRE commits to equity and wellbeing outcomes, including encouraging and enabling diversity and inclusion in its teaching activities.
- A CoRE ensures key investigators have the opportunity to influence the experience of graduate students and postdoctoral fellows working with the CoRE.

CoRE collaboration and collaborative practices within CoREs

The CoRE model is a collaborative research partnership hosted by a TEI. It has appropriate governance and processes to ensure all partners contribute to delivery of agreed strategic outcomes.

- The host and partners share responsibility for the development and regular review of institutional partner agreements.
- Agreements recognise a combined responsibility for resourcing the CoRE as well as ensuring that research is of excellent quality and adds strategic benefit.
- Agreements set out host and partner contributions, which include financial and/or in-kind contributions.
- The CoRE host and partners together agree and implement collaborative policies and practices.

Engagement by CoREs with end-users and stakeholders

CoREs are characterised by active and outward-facing engagement with next-stage and potential end-users to ensure the CoRE delivers the strategic benefits it seeks for New Zealand.

- A CoRE will invite potential end-users to contribute to the planning of current and future research options, including consideration of potential for impact.
- A CoRE engages in research translation to support and encourage research uptake.
- CoRE outreach can take many forms and have many audiences. A CoRE will identify its outreach partners and explore with them the best ways to engage.
- A CoRE develops an engagement plan to bring focus to its dialogue with stakeholders, and its knowledge exchange activities and connections.

The role of CoREs at a national and international level

A CoRE demonstrates authority in its research area, both in New Zealand and overseas.

- A CoRE builds wide networks within national and international research communities and uses this connectivity to strengthen its research, people, engagement and influence.
- A CoRE deploys its leadership to facilitate wide stakeholder debate on issues of significance.
- A CoRE operates as a showcase for New Zealand.