

## Cabinet Paper material

### Proactive release

Minister & portfolio Hon Jenny Salesa, Associate Minister of Education  
Name of package Criteria for the Next Centres of Research Excellence Funding Round  
Date considered 6 May 2019

#### These documents have been proactively released:

**Cabinet paper: Criteria for the Next Centres of Research Excellence Funding Round**

Date considered: 1 May 2019, Social Wellbeing Committee  
Author: Ministry of Education

**Social Wellbeing Committee minute – SWC-19-MIN-0044**

Date considered: 1 May 2019  
Author: Cabinet Office

**Cabinet minute – CAB-19-MIN-0203**

Date considered: 6 May 2019  
Author: Cabinet Office

#### Material redacted

Some deletions have been made from the documents as the information withheld does not fall within scope of the Minister's portfolio responsibilities, and is not relevant to the proactive release of this material.

Chair, Cabinet Social Wellbeing Committee

## **CRITERIA FOR THE NEXT CENTRES OF RESEARCH EXCELLENCE FUNDING ROUND**

### **Proposal**

1. We are seeking Cabinet's agreement to make improvements to Centres of Research Excellence (CoREs). These will take effect from the next CoREs investment round process, due to begin in mid-2019.

### **Executive Summary**

2. CoREs are semi-autonomous, inter-institutional research organisations hosted by a tertiary education institution (TEI)<sup>1</sup>. The CoREs policy was designed to address fragmentation across the tertiary education, research, and science and innovation systems. As well as producing high-quality inter-disciplinary research, CoREs provide postgraduate programmes and training for New Zealand's research workforce.
3. There are currently 10 CoREs funded through until the end of 2020. Government funding for CoREs amounts to \$50 million per year. Each CoRE focusses on a different area of research specialisation (see Appendix 1).
4. The Tertiary Education Commission will begin a contestable open process for the next round of CoREs in mid-2019.
5. This Government has prioritised equity and wellbeing outcomes. We think there is an opportunity for CoREs to give effect to these priorities by committing to actions that increase the diversity and inclusion of their research and teaching activities, particularly with regard to Māori and Pacific peoples.
6. We therefore propose the next CoREs selection round includes a focus on equity and wellbeing in the selection and assessment criteria for all applicants, as well as in the CoREs' common mission statement.
7. We have confidence in CoREs to continue to deliver excellent research that is of significant benefit to New Zealand. We therefore also propose to extend the CoREs' contract period from six to eight years and will apply this to all proposals successful in the next selection round. We expect this will give CoREs more certainty in planning their future research activities, and support more graduate and postgraduate students.

### **Background**

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1 A tertiary education institution is a university, institute of technology/polytechnic, or wānanga.

8. CoREs are semi-autonomous, inter-institutional research networks of high-performing researchers from TEIs and (in many cases) Crown Research Institutes, working together to deliver a commonly agreed research plan. CoREs produce high-quality inter-disciplinary research and contribute to New Zealand's research capacity and capability through postgraduate programmes and by training the future research workforce.
9. The CoREs policy was established in 2001 and designed to address fragmentation across the tertiary education, research, and science and innovation systems. The CoREs fund (in addition to the Performance-Based Research Fund) has a significant focus on tertiary education outcomes. The investigator-led nature of CoREs research complements other government research funding such as the National Science Challenges, which target specified research topics and/or areas of national importance.
10. There are currently 10 CoREs, all hosted by universities and focussed on a wide variety of research areas (see Appendix 1) – nine 'standard' CoREs and one Māori research-focussed CoRE. The last funding round specified that there should be at least one Māori research-focussed CoRE and we propose to retain this requirement.
11. The Māori research-focussed CoRE was appointed to concentrate on the Māori research community. The current CoRE, Ngā Pae o te Māramatanga, supports established and emerging Māori researchers, makes a significant contribution to the achievement of Māori graduate and postgraduate students, and supports and nurtures mātauranga Māori. It was selected and assessed on the same criteria as all other CoREs, with the additional requirement to support the goals set out in: Ka Hikitia (the Māori Education Strategy); He Kai Kei Aku Ringa (the Crown-Māori Economic Growth Partnership); the Vision Mātauranga policy (administered by the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment); and Maihi Karauna (the Crown's Māori Language Strategy).
12. The CoREs fund amounts to \$50 million per year and is apportioned between CoREs, based on the value of their contracted research and other activities for a term of up to six years. Current contracts for all CoREs will expire at the end of 2020.
13. Proposals are currently selected and assessed in accordance with four general criteria – excellence: excellent research (the primary criterion); contribution within the tertiary education system; contribution to New Zealand's future development; and governance and management.
14. CoREs operate under a common mission statement that sets out high level expectations in terms of role, performance and achievements, as well as shared responsibilities of host and partners. The mission statement forms the basis of each CoRE's contractual obligation to provide regular reporting on its progress towards meeting its agreed research plan.

## **Proposals for the next CoREs funding round**

***The Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) will begin a selection process for a further round of CoREs in mid-2019***

15. The selection of CoREs will again be a fully-contestable process, coordinated by the Royal Society Te Apārangi on behalf of the TEC. This process will be open to all current and prospective CoREs, meaning some CoREs are likely to be funded again, some new ones may emerge, and some current CoREs may no longer be funded. As in previous selection rounds, the number of CoREs will be limited to a maximum of 10 and there will be a requirement for at least one Māori research-focussed CoRE to be funded. The Royal Society will be asked to give consideration to the additional requirements placed on the Māori research-focussed CoRE in its assessments.
16. The TEC will be issuing guidelines as part of a Request for Proposals process in mid-2019. These will contain information for the sector on the completion of applications, including how to address selection criteria, and the process for the next CoREs investment round.
17. It is our view that CoREs make an important contribution to the tertiary education sector and that the CoREs policy is working well. This view is confirmed by the independent panel commissioned by the TEC to conduct the 2017 mid-term review of all 10 CoREs. The panel found that not only have CoREs integrated and engaged the majority of New Zealand's very best researchers, but that the research they produce is likely to deliver significant benefits to New Zealand.
18. The review panel did note that with two exceptions, CoREs would benefit from improving their engagement with Māori and Pacific researchers and communities. The panel also noted that there is a lack of women, Māori and Pacific peoples in governance and principal investigator roles.

***We propose to refine the selection criteria and expectations on CoREs from the next investment round***

19. This Government has prioritised equity and wellbeing outcomes. This is in addition to the Crown's obligations under the Treaty of Waitangi. We are particularly interested in prioritising the participation of Māori and Pacific peoples, and others (such as women in senior academic roles) who are often under-represented in New Zealand's tertiary education and research, science and innovation systems.
20. For the next investment round, we propose to ensure CoREs prioritise a commitment to improving equity and wellbeing outcomes. Although there is no reason why CoREs cannot do this under current operating requirements, by making this a specific focus for the next investment round, it will increase the incentive to do so.
21. New selection rounds are opportunities for new CoRE proposals to demonstrate their potential value against existing CoREs, and will form part of the outcomes against which the TEC will assess future performance. CoREs will be required to demonstrate the action they will take to effect change.

***We propose a change to the CoREs' selection and assessment criteria***

22. We propose that in the selection and assessment of CoREs, all applicants will be required to demonstrate, through a credible strategy and broad set of specific actions, how the proposed CoRE will commit to equity and wellbeing outcomes, as well as how it will encourage and enable diversity and inclusion, in its research and teaching activities.
23. This could include, for example, plans for increasing the participation of Māori and Pacific students in CoRE research projects; developing ways to increase the numbers of women in senior governance and research positions; longer-term scholarships for students with parental responsibilities; or ways to attract and increase support for researchers with disabilities. The TEC will provide further clarity as part of the Request for Proposals process.
24. We recognise that some CoREs will face challenges in fulfilling this requirement and how applicants respond will depend on the distinct nature, research expertise, and academic disciplines of each CoRE. In addition, since CoREs depend on the existing education pipeline for their graduate and postgraduate students, some may find it easier than others to increase participation rates. The TEC will instruct the Royal Society to take these kinds of constraints into account in the selection and assessment process.

***We also propose two changes in the CoREs' common mission statement***

25. As with the selection and assessment criteria, our particular focus is on equity and wellbeing outcomes and how these can be achieved by increasing diversity and inclusion.
26. We propose that these be included in the CoREs' mission statement as part of the conditions:
  - 26.1. "Research carried out by CoREs". This could be a research focus on improving equity and wellbeing, or diversity and inclusion on the research team that could include, at a broad level, such things as: research and/or programmes targeted at particular groups (e.g. Māori and Pacific peoples); postdoctoral positions reserved for early career researchers; collaborative research projects with local communities; or increasing the number of women in senior research roles.
  - 26.2. "CoREs as an element in the tertiary education system". At a general level, this could include such things as: ensuring appropriate training and experience for graduates from particular groups (e.g. Māori and Pacific students) through internships, and funding for student placements; working with industry to provide courses to upskill staff within businesses as well as providing students with business/industry skills; and including students in all research projects.
27. A copy of the proposed new mission statement is attached as Appendix 2.

***Finally, we propose extending the CoREs' contract period from six to eight years***

28. Internationally, the contract period for the CoREs model varies between five and 10 years. The model also differs between countries. The New Zealand CoREs model is intended to complement the design and policy intent of other research funds. National Science Challenges, for example, are designed as one-off, 10-year investments.
29. We are proposing to extend the contract period for all CoREs contracted from 1 January 2021 from the current six years to a term of eight years. Increasing the contract period by a further two years would:
  - 29.1. acknowledge that the CoREs model is performing well;
  - 29.2. demonstrate the Government's commitment to continuing the CoREs policy initiative;
  - 29.3. provide CoREs with increased ability to plan for the long term – this will give more certainty of tenure for prospective staff and students;
  - 29.4. allow CoREs to more fully mature and so deliver greater benefits in established areas of research;
  - 29.5. create more certainty for top quality students, postdoctoral candidates, and staff; and
  - 29.6. result in less frequent funding rounds and ultimately reduced transactions costs for all parties.
30. With the current six-year term, the mid-term review falls either quite early or late in the funding period. If a mid-term review is undertaken at, say, the two and a half year mark, new CoREs are likely to have had little time in which to produce measurable results. If the mid-term review falls later than the three year mark, any CoREs with identified issues have only a short time to turn these around. An eight year time frame will enable any CoRE identified as having issues needing to be remedied sufficient time in which to do so.
31. Stakeholder feedback included both positive and negative comment on extending the contract period, but on balance all but one respondent agreed with our proposal.
32. The mid-term review will provide assurance of the value of this longer investment. It will be robust and carry a real risk of a reduction or end to funding for CoREs that are not performing.

**Next steps**

33. Subject to Cabinet agreement, the Minister of Education will issue a new CoREs funding determination, allowing the TEC to begin the selection process for the next round of CoREs. The funding determination will include the requirement for all proposals to include a focus on equity and wellbeing, an extended contract term, and a revised CoREs mission statement.

## **Consultation**

34. All university Vice Chancellors and Deputy Vice Chancellors Research, the Chief Executives of each institute of technology, polytechnic and wānanga, and the Directors of all current CoREs, were invited to give feedback on the proposed changes. This feedback is summarised in Appendix 3.

## **Other agency involvement**

35. The TEC has been involved in the development of this paper and will manage the implementation of the next CoREs investment round. The following departments have also been consulted and their views incorporated as appropriate: Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (Science and Innovation), Te Puni Kōkiri, Ministry for Pacific Peoples, Ministry of Health, Ministry for Women, Ministry for Primary Industries, Education New Zealand, The Treasury and the Department of Internal Affairs. The Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet has been informed.

## **Financial Implications**

36. There are no financial implications. The costs of the CoREs selection and assessment process and ongoing funding of CoREs will be met within baselines.

## **Legislative Implications**

37. There are no legislative implications.

## **Human Rights**

38. There are no human rights implications.

## **Gender Implications**

39. The inclusion of criteria focussed on equity and wellbeing in the selection and operation of CoREs is intended to improve the gender diversity of the research workforce. This would include, for example, increasing the participation of women in senior governance roles in the research, science and innovation system.

## **Disability Perspective**

40. The inclusion of criteria focussed on equity and wellbeing in the selection and operation of CoREs is intended to increase the diversity of the research workforce, which will include increasing the participation of disabled people in the research, science and innovation system.

## **Publicity**

41. The TEC will publicly announce the next CoREs selection round and its timing in mid-2019, along with guidelines for proposals.

## Proactive Release

42. The Minister and Associate Minister of Education propose to release this paper proactively.

## Recommendations

The Minister of Education and the Associate Minister of Education (Hon Jenny Salesa) recommend that the Committee:

1. **note** that we consider the objectives of the Centres of Research Excellence (CoREs) policy to be broadly fit-for-purpose;
2. **agree** to the inclusion of equity and wellbeing outcomes (including research and teaching plans and activities that promote diversity and inclusion for Māori, Pacific peoples, and other under-represented groups) to the selection and assessment criteria for all CoREs proposals;
3. **agree** to including a focus on equity and wellbeing, including encouraging and enabling diversity and inclusion, in the research and teaching conditions of the CoREs' common mission statement;
4. **agree** to extending the contract period from six to eight years for all CoREs contracted from 1 January 2021;
5. **note** that these changes will be reflected in the funding determination, which is required to be released before the Tertiary Education Commission can initiate the process for a further selection round for CoREs in mid-2019;
6. **note** that we have consulted with sector stakeholders most likely to be affected by these changes and their feedback is broadly positive.

Authorised for lodgement

Hon Chris Hipkins

Minister of Education

Hon Jenny Salesa

Associate Minister of Education



## Appendix 1: Current CoREs (all funded to 31 December 2020)

CoRE	Research Focus	Host institution
The Bio-Protection Research Centre	Innovative, natural and sustainable solutions to protect New Zealand's plant-based, productive ecosystems from pests, diseases and weeds.	Lincoln University
Brain Research New Zealand	Neurodegenerative disorders of the ageing brain; such as Dementia, Stroke, Parkinson's Disease, Alzheimer's Disease and Huntington's Disease.	University of Auckland (2015-2017) University of Otago (2018-2020)
The Dodd-Walls Centre	The manipulation of light at the most fundamental, quantum level and the control and manipulation of matter at the atomic scale through the use of light.	University of Otago
The MacDiarmid Institute	Advanced materials and nanotechnology research into electronic and photovoltaic materials, nano-porous materials, functional nanomaterials, and new nano-tools for cellular studies.	Victoria University Wellington
The Maurice Wilkins Centre	Biomedical research to improve the diagnosis and treatment of cancer, diabetes and infectious disease by developing cutting-edge drugs and vaccines, tools for early diagnosis and prevention, and developing new models of disease.	University of Auckland
MedTech CoRE	Medical technologies research into new technologies to improve hospital, community and home-based healthcare.	University of Auckland
Ngā Pae o te Māramatanga	Research of relevance to Māori communities including Whai Rawa (The Māori Economy), Te Tai Ao (The Natural Environment) and Mauri Ora (Human Flourishing).	University of Auckland
Quake CoRE	Earthquake resilience research across the physical sciences, engineering and social sciences.	University of Canterbury
The Riddet Institute	Fundamental and strategic scientific research in food at the intersection of food material science, gastrointestinal biology and human nutrition.	Massey University
Te Pūnaha Matatini	Methods and approaches for transforming complex data about New Zealand's environment, economy, and society into knowledge, tools, and insight for making better decisions.	University of Auckland

## **Appendix 2: Draft Revised 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 its 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 staff.
- 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.

### Appendix 3: Summary of stakeholder feedback

- In total, 17 responses were received; nine CoREs, six universities, and two ITPs.
- Overall, stakeholder feedback was positive. Responses suggested that by focusing on equity and wellbeing, the Government was sending a strong and clear message to the sector, but the emphasis should be on action taken to effect change through year-on-year improvement, rather than the delivery of numbers and/or targets. Some asked for more clarity/definition of equity and wellbeing, and diversity and inclusion.
- There was a general concern that CoREs will have varying capacity to respond to the requirement to demonstrate a commitment to equity and wellbeing, and some may need to do more work in this area than others. Some suggested that extra funding is likely to be needed for CoREs to be able to engage effectively with communities and groups and to build capability. Several respondents noted the need to ensure that this does not place an extra, non-research burden on Māori and Pacific researchers.
- Several respondents stressed that each CoRE should be assessed according to its unique nature and areas of research expertise, and that the assessment panel needs to include people with knowledge and experience of the local research context.
- There was both positive and negative comment on the proposal to extend the CoREs' contract period from six to eight years. Most agreed that it would allow CoREs to, for example, set more ambitious research goals, enable two cohorts of PhD students, and allow more time for impact and planning.
- On the other hand, respondents were concerned that it might reduce opportunities for new CoREs to come through sooner, and for the sector to respond to emerging research opportunities. Some suggested that selection rounds could be staggered, with two eight year blocks contested every four years, but the cost implications would outweigh any benefits for all parties.
- On balance, all but one respondent agreed that extending the contract period was a positive change.



# Cabinet Social Wellbeing Committee

## Minute of Decision

*This document contains information for the New Zealand Cabinet. It must be treated in confidence and handled in accordance with any security classification, or other endorsement. The information can only be released, including under the Official Information Act 1982, by persons with the appropriate authority.*

### Criteria for the Next Centres of Research Excellence Funding Round

**Portfolios**                      **Education / Associate Education (Hon Jenny Salesa)**

On 1 May 2019, the Cabinet Social Wellbeing Committee:

- 1        **noted** that the Minister of Education and the Associate Minister of Education (Hon Jenny Salesa) (the Ministers) consider the objectives of the Centres of Research Excellence (CoREs) policy to be broadly fit-for-purpose;
- 2        **agreed** to the inclusion of equity and wellbeing outcomes (including research and teaching plans and activities that promote diversity and inclusion for Māori, Pacific peoples, and other under-represented groups) in the selection and assessment criteria for all CoREs proposals;
- 3        **agreed** to including a focus on equity and wellbeing, including encouraging and enabling diversity and inclusion, in the research and teaching conditions of the CoREs' common mission statement;
- 4        **agreed** to extend the contract period for all CoREs contracted from 1 January 2021 from six to eight years;
- 5        **noted** that these changes will be reflected in the funding determination, which is required to be released before the Tertiary Education Commission can initiate the process for a further selection round for CoREs in mid-2019;
- 6        **noted** that sector stakeholders most likely to be affected by these changes have consulted with, and their feedback is broadly positive.

Gerrard Carter  
Committee Secretary

**Hard-copy distribution: (see over)**

**Present:**

Rt Hon Jacinda Ardern  
Hon Kelvin Davis  
Hon Grant Robertson  
Hon Phil Twyford  
Hon Chris Hipkins  
Hon Andrew Little  
Hon Carmel Sepuloni (Chair)  
Hon Dr David Clark  
Hon Nanaia Mahuta  
Hon Stuart Nash  
Hon Jenny Salesa  
Hon Tracey Martin  
Hon Aupito William Sio  
Hon Julie Anne Genter

**Officials present from:**

Office of the Prime Minister  
Office of the Chair  
Officials Committee for SWC

**Hard-copy distribution:**

Minister of Education  
Associate Minister of Education (Hon Jenny Salesa)



# Cabinet

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### Report of the Cabinet Social Wellbeing Committee: Period Ended 3 May 2019

On 6 May 2019, Cabinet made the following decisions on the work of the Cabinet Social Wellbeing Committee for the period ended 3 May 2019:

[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
	[REDACTED]	
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
	[REDACTED]	
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
	[REDACTED]	
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
	[REDACTED]	
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
	[REDACTED]	

SWC-19-MIN-0044

#### Criteria for the Next Centres of Research Excellence Funding Round

Portfolios: Education / Associate Education  
(Hon Jenny Salesa)

CONFIRMED

[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]

Redactions made as content out of scope of Minister's portfolio responsibility





Redactions made as content out of scope of Minister's portfolio responsibility

Michael Webster  
Secretary of the Cabinet

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Cabinet Social Wellbeing Committee

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