

## Enabling the strategic priorities and initiatives set out in Taumata Teitei through Faculty, School and Department Research Centres in the Faculty of Science

### Request for Proposals

#### Background

Last year, Te Tari Rautaki Rangahau, Matatika, the Office of Research Strategy & Integrity (ORSI) announced the launch of the [Hikina kia Tutuki Grand Challenges Fund](#) to support the establishment and development of flagship University Research Centres. Following that process, it was envisaged that Faculties would run a similar but scaled-down process to establish Faculty and School/department centres under the new [Research Centres Policy](#).

This document outlines the process that we will take in the Faculty of Science for establishing the first tranche of research centres under the new policy. After this first tranche of centres is established, the Dean may periodically release a Request for Proposals (RFP) for the establishment of faculty or school/department research centres or invite emerging consortia to apply for centre status. In other words, there will be other opportunities for developing research centres in the future. Whether or not applications for future centres are successful will depend on how well they fit with the strategic priorities of the faculty and the existing portfolio of centres, as well as the capacity of the Faculty to support them.

#### Our vision for Faculty of Science Research Centres

First and foremost, Research centres at all levels within the University are intended to be critical enablers of the strategic priorities and initiatives set out in [Taumata Teitei – Vision 2030 and Strategic Plan 2025](#). There are four key parameters that will determine the appropriate category for a research centre (i.e., whether University, Faculty, or School/Department level). These are, with no single characteristic being determinative:

- Scale of contribution to University's strategic priorities and initiatives
- Scale of transdisciplinary approach
- National / international recognition for Excellence and Impact
- Potential to become a sustainable national/international centre of significance

In general, the expectation that a centre embodies all these characteristics to a high level increases from School/Department through Faculty to University centres. For example, Faculty centre X may contribute strongly to the University's strategic priorities, be internationally recognised for excellence, and be somewhat transdisciplinary, whereas School/Department centre Y might contribute to some aspects of the University's strategic priorities and initiatives, be nationally recognised for excellence but may not be strongly transdisciplinary.

All Research Centres, whether at University, Faculty, or School/Department level are expected to demonstrate a strong commitment to engagement with our various partner, stakeholder, and end-user communities in ways that reflect the values and Te Ao Māori Principles of Waipapa Taumata Rau and our shared commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

There is an expectation that Research Centres established within the Faculty of Science will be well connected and aligned with any other relevant research centres, research platforms and other initiatives within the university and beyond.

It is important here to note that not all research hubs and consortia should feel compelled to develop a research centre, particularly if a group does not have strong aspirations to grow in scale. It is perfectly fine to maintain activity on an informal basis, being supported through other contestable funding available at Department/School (e.g., DRDF grants); Faculty (e.g., RDF grants) and University level (e.g., Transdisciplinary ideation fund grants) as well as externally funded research grants and/or philanthropy.

### **Faculty support available**

All Faculty Centres approved in 2022 will have access to some financial and administrative support from the faculty from 1 January 2023, for a period of 5 years (subject to mid-term review). The total available funding from the faculty's Research Development Fund for all faculty research centres combined is currently \$200,000 per annum. The Assessment Panel will make a recommendation to be endorsed by Research Committee as to what proportion of this funding to allocate to each approved faculty centre in 2023. The amount of funding approved for each centre will reflect the scale and needs of the Centre and thus will vary between centres. As this is a new approach, both the overall amount of funding and how it is distributed will be reviewed after this first year. If there is funding left over after allocation to Faculty centres this may be offered to Department/School centres. The funding can be used for a range of eligible expenses based on the individual needs of each Centre, including:

- Research expenses and consumables
- Seed grants
- Other Centre development and engagement activities.

See the [Research Development Fund Guidelines](#) for more detail on what expenditure is allowed within this fund. In addition to direct funding, the Faculty will provide administrative and research management support for faculty-level centres through a Centres Research Operations Manager (ROM) or similar, whose role will be dedicated to supporting the Faculty's portfolio of Faculty Research Centres.

The Faculty will also support specific activities for Centres at all levels (School/Department and Faculty) as the need arises. These could include:

- Grant writing support
- Support for engagement with Māori
- Ideation workshops

All approved research centres may also be eligible to apply for targeted growth funds from the pool of internal funding administered by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) to pursue strategic development and impact opportunities, subject to the guidelines for those funds. Furthermore, individual Schools/Departments might also make funds available for School and Department level centres from their DRDF funds.

## Eligibility

Applications must be consistent with the [Research Centre Policy](#) and Research Centre definition.

Applications are invited from existing approved Faculty and School/Department Research Centres as well as new research groups seeking approval as a Faculty or School/Department Research Centre. This may include existing Department/School Research Centres that are seeking recategorisation as a Faculty Research Centres, or vice-versa.

- All existing Research Centres (both levels) are **required** to apply through this process to retain or modify their Research Centre status. Those that don't apply will be invited to discuss a process of disestablishment.
- Existing Research Centres with aligned interests are encouraged to amalgamate for scale where appropriate.

## Host

All Research Centres will have a primary host Faculty or School/Department (depending on category), however sharing of host responsibilities and funding contributions can be negotiated and agreed with other Faculties (for Faculty Research Centres) and Schools/Departments (for School/Department Research Centres).

## Application Process

The application process includes two stages: An initial Expression of Interest (EOI), and a Full Proposal that includes a strategic and operational plan. Note: the application form for full proposals may be different for the two categories (Faculty and School/Department). The table below outlines the process and timeline:

Date	Activity
Early June 2022	RFP for Research Centres in the Faculty of Science released.
1 July 2022	Deadline for Expressions of Interest (EOI). EOIs shared amongst the faculty.
Mid-July 2022	Evaluation of EOIs by Assessment Panel; assess for appropriate category, and any possible mergers.
20 July 2022	Feedback on EOIs provided to applicants. Successful EOIs invited to full proposal.
31 August 2022	Deadline for submission of Full Proposals from invited applicants (for both categories).
Late September 2022	Evaluation of Full Proposals by Assessment Panel. Prepare recommendations for endorsement.
27 September 2022	Endorsement at Faculty Research Committee meeting; Dean signs off.
19 October 2022	Endorsement (Faculty Research Centres only) by UARC.
28 November 2022	Endorsement (Faculty Research Centres only) by Senate.
01 January 2023	All Centres commence from this date.

## Assessment Criteria

Full Proposals will be assessed in accordance with the four key parameters for Research Centres at the University of Auckland, as well as an additional criterion related to suitability of operational plan and budget, as outlined in the table below:

Assessment Criteria	Description and components
<b>Scale of contribution to University's strategic priorities and initiatives</b>	Alignment to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the purpose, vision, Te Ao Māori Principles, and values of Waipapa Taumata Rau</li> <li>• the impact areas set out in Taumata Teitei</li> <li>• the priorities and initiatives of Taumata Teitei in one or more of the following areas:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Research and Innovation</li> <li>▪ Education and Student Experience</li> <li>▪ Partnerships and Engagement</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>National/international recognition for Excellence and Impact</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• approach to Vision Mātauranga and responsiveness to Māori</li> <li>• strength of the proposed research team</li> <li>• strength of the proposed research plan</li> <li>• alignment with issues, problems, and opportunities of national and/or international significance</li> <li>• benefits to Aotearoa</li> <li>• credibility of impact pathway(s)</li> <li>• scale and extent of proposed impacts</li> <li>• strength of relationships</li> </ul>
<b>Scale of Transdisciplinary approach</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• diversity of disciplines engaged</li> <li>• depth of integration across disciplines</li> <li>• degrees of interaction with non-academic stakeholders</li> <li>• composition of non-academic stakeholders</li> <li>• timing of participatory engagement</li> <li>• types of knowledge that are emphasised</li> </ul> Consideration should be given to responsiveness to Māori in each of the above points
<b>Potential for growth, for example to become a sustainable University Research Centre or LSRI, or National/International Centre of significance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• potential to develop long term mana-enhancing relationships with Māori partners</li> <li>• opportunities for sustainable funding identified</li> <li>• potential to leverage external funding arrangements and complementary initiatives</li> <li>• credible pathway for the future development of the centre</li> <li>• track record of team developing initiatives to scale</li> </ul>
<b>Suitability of operational plan and budget</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Well-designed strategic plan for the Research Centre</li> <li>• Appropriate objectives, deliverables, and milestones</li> <li>• Suitable annual Budget (Faculty Centres only)</li> </ul>

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