

## *Te Ara Paerangi / Future Pathways: feedback from the School of Linguistics and Applied Language Studies, Victoria University of Wellington*

The Research Committee of the School of Linguistics and Applied Language Studies at Victoria University of Wellington discussed the green paper *Te Ara Paerangi / Future Pathways*, and offers the feedback given below, which we have aligned to the most relevant questions set out on pages 13-15 of the green paper. Members of the committee saw many positives in the green paper, in particular the explicit acknowledgement of the significance of social science (and humanities) research, the highlighting of databases as core research tools, and the foregrounding of interdisciplinary and interinstitutional research, all of which are significant components of research in our disciplines.

Question 7, Section 3.2.1: *How should we decide what constitutes a core function and how do we fund them?* and

Question 17, Section 6.2.2: *How do we support sustainable, efficient and enabling investment in research infrastructure?*

We applaud the green paper's identification of databases as a core element of research. Much research in linguistics and applied linguistics generates and is dependent on large databases of recordings of interactions. Currently such databases and their managers are poorly supported, and contestable funding often explicitly rules out supporting the development of research databases and corpora, which require processes for archiving and for ensuring long-term stability of access. A source of ongoing funding to support the collection and maintenance of databases is essential.

Question 8, Section 3.3.2: *Do you think a base grant funding model will improve stability and resilience for research organisations, and how should we go about designing and implementing such a funding model?*

A base funding component would be welcomed if it allows TEOs to better manage overheads so that these do not impact on the useability of the grant funding that comes to researchers and research teams. However, it is unclear to what extent the envisaged base funding would supplement rather than replace grant funding. To the extent that it replaces grant funding, then a concern is that researchers and research sectors that currently miss out on external funding might continue to miss out on internal funding. For disciplines in the social sciences and humanities this has had and continues to have equity repercussions, given for example the historical predominance of female, Māori and Pasifika researchers in these disciplines.

Question 13, Section 4.6: *How do we better support knowledge exchange and impact generation?* and

Question 14, Section 5.2: *How should we include workforce considerations in the design of national research Priorities?*

There's an assumption that impact takes place linearly, which ignores the complexity of ongoing community engagement and relationship fostering that's a cornerstone of Māori and Pacific research. There also needs to be enough time at the start of grants to engage in the very complex

relationship building process, which necessarily unfolds at differing speeds, depending on the people involved and what type of engagement is most appropriate. There also needs to be more recognition of and compensation for the huge amount of time invested by elders, community members, youth, etc. in research projects. This also includes space for hiring, training, and actively including community members in the research process, regardless of any prior connections to universities or research institutions. See <https://www.mpp.govt.nz/assets/Reports/Pacific-Economy-Research-Report-on-Unpaid-Work-and-Volunteering-in-Aotearoa.pdf>

Questions 14 & 15, Sections 5.2, 5.3.1: *How should we include workforce considerations in the design of national research Priorities? What impact would a base grant have on the research workforce?*

Historically it has been very difficult to secure funding for postdoctoral positions in the social sciences and humanities, largely because of the overhead components that are tied to appointing postdoctoral researchers. These constitute a large proportion of the grant funding being applied for in submissions that are chasing comparatively small pots of available funding (compared with the 'hard' sciences). Not only do postdoctoral researchers bring considerable research experience and knowledge to the research programmes with which they are associated, but postdoctoral positions provide excellent career development opportunities to new and emerging researchers. We believe that a good use of base grant funding would be to support postdoctoral positions, but this needs to be an acknowledged and protected component of base grant funding.

Question 17, Section 6.2.2: *How do we support sustainable, efficient and enabling investment in research infrastructure?*

A key consideration in response to this question is that research infrastructure is not all about laboratory space in the traditional sense. Sufficient funding also needs to be available to maintain the dedicated physical and virtual space necessary for sustained collaboration as well as for the protection and storage of our data.

In terms of funding mechanisms, it has frequently been the experience of our researchers that the decision panels for funding bodies that claim to be interdisciplinary (such as for Rutherford Discovery Fellowships or for MBIE/Endeavour funding) often have minimal representation from researchers in the social sciences and humanities, themselves each very broad areas. As a result, a single researcher is often faced with the task of advising on decision making in areas for which they have little expertise. For example, a Pasifika researcher may be asked to make judgements on research with Pasifika content across a large range of disciplines, or a single social scientist on a multi-disciplinary panel who has no experience in Linguistics is asked to judge an application from a researcher in Linguistics. This is inefficient use of their time and is hardly enabling for the researchers whose applications they are considering.