

## The George Mason Centre for the Natural Environment (GMCNE)

### Request for Proposals 2020

The GMCNE is a multi-disciplinary research centre in the Faculty of Science at the University of Auckland with a focus on the following areas of research:

- Environmental Restoration
- Environmental Conservation
- Environmental Sustainability

The Centre is intended to support a diverse range of research projects to address questions within and across different natural ecosystems that demonstrate a direct impact on issues of environmental restoration, conservation and/or sustainability.

The GMCNE will promote relevant areas of research not only across the University of Auckland, but also for those engaged as part of a team undertaking research in conjunction with other tertiary institutions, Crown Research Institutes, companies, NGOs or civil society with similar objectives.

#### Request for Proposals: Due date Friday 16<sup>th</sup> October 1.00pm

This RfP provides an opportunity for researchers at UoA and their colleagues to support students and seed projects that enhance the aims of the GMCNE. Projects will be selected on the criteria specified below. The Expert Advisory Panel will also be looking to identify and foster the connection between projects that leads to thematic research and to expanded funding opportunities for research and application. This is an opportunity to extend and link your research to foster a wider collaboration in finding solutions to environmental problems.

We will accept new projects and developments based on previously funded projects that represent key steps towards environmental solutions.

#### Research funds

Research funds enable GMCNE investigators to take advantage of exciting new ideas that require interdisciplinary research to support solutions to environmental challenges, while simultaneously building links across the GMCNE's network, especially between institutions.

Through the George Mason Scholars initiative there is also the opportunity to build capacity in solution focused interdisciplinary environmental research. Workshops or think-tanks offer the opportunity to bring together researchers from within New Zealand and overseas to shed new light on vexing environmental problems or unaddressed directions.

The GMCNE will help to identify new solutions and to draw public attention to the role of the GMCNE, academe and interdisciplinary science in contributing solutions to restoration, conservation and sustainability challenges in our natural environment.

This document describes the intention of the programme, and how investigators can access support.

The underlying theme for all proposals should align with supporting Environmental Restoration – Conservation – Sustainability. Areas of Research may include but not be exclusive to:

- *Environmental Change* (developing techniques for monitoring, forecasting and analysing change and environmental future scenario development)

- *Hilltops-Ocean* (restoration, ecosystem services, flows and implications for integrative management, cumulative effects)
- *Resilience* (tipping points and bottlenecks to restoration)
- *Socio-ecological systems* (citizen science; governance-science-society; psychology; education; investment; new economies)
- *Emerging technologies for the environment* (Green Chemistry; sampling technologies; monitoring and mapping; models)
- *Plastic pollution* (ecological effects, particle transport, breakdown, environmental and engineering solutions)
- *The principles of Vision Mātauranga* (particularly Taiao, achieving Environmental Sustainability through iwi and hapū relationships with land and sea)
- *Kauri Die Back* (option of control particularly relevant to supporting the survivorship of large trees.)

We will consider new projects and project that add to and develop current projects and programmes, please see our full list of projects on our [website](#).

## Assessment Criteria

All projects should be strategically aligned with the vision and aims of the GMCNE.

Opportunities to link projects within the GMCNE and into broader research and societal networks are encouraged. Capacity building and collaboration is encouraged as well as creating a training environment for post-graduate students across the University and other institutions.

Research projects will be assessed by the GMCNE Expert Advisory Group, and international/independent reviewers as appropriate.

The assessment of proposals will focus on the following:

- **Project Alignment:** Projects must relate to the conservation, restoration and sustainability themes of the GMCNE
- **Affecting Change:** Research must have the potential to demonstrate impact and accelerate change
- **Interdisciplinary Approach:** Evidence of interdisciplinary research (projects demonstrating involvement of researchers in more than one discipline)
- **Scientific Merit:** Knowledge development; rigor and merit
- **Building Connections:** Evidence of building connections and synergies
- **Expansion:** Evidence of potential pathway to expansion of research

Overall, the GMCNE Expert Advisory Group will prioritise projects where it is clear that the project advances the GMCNE, and that it can lead to potential connections across the GMCNE and broader research and community networks that then enhance the potential to attract further research support.

### Please Note:

- For student supervision, the primary supervisor must be a UoA investigator. If a primary supervisor is listed as such on more than one MSc or PhD scholarship application, in this round, then only one application will be funded. If more than one application is considered by the Expert Advisory Group as fundable, then the Director will consult with the investigator to determine which application should be awarded funding. New and existing post-graduate students (i.e. new or in their 1st, 2nd, 3rd year of study) are all eligible.
- Projects can be submitted with or without a named student or Post-doctoral Fellow. If a suitable student or Post-doctoral Fellow is not named and the project is approved, a timeframe within

which a suitable student should be identified will be indicated in the approval letter, usually a period of six months. If a Post-doctoral Fellow is named, please include an up-to-date CV.

- The GMCNE is committed to ensuring representation of the Māori and Pacific Island communities amongst its research programmes. Applications for support of students from these groups are encouraged.
- Once funded, researchers should expect to provide reports every 6 months to the centre to meet requirements of the Governance group; support media and other outreach; contribute to and build networks to expand funding and activities of the GMCNE.

<b>The GMCNE invites applications for:</b>	
<b>Seed projects</b>	Up to \$10,000 to cover research expenses for one year (including travel, equipment etc. but not salary or buyout)
<b>PhD scholarships</b>	\$28,000 stipend plus \$8,500 worth of fees per year for 3 years (\$109,500)
<b>MSc fees scholarship</b>	\$10,000
<b>Postdoctoral fellowships</b>	Equivalent to 2 years' worth of salary \$188,000 includes ACC and Superannuation
<b>Hosting Workshops</b>	\$5,000

An individual project can be submitted with any combination of the above types of funding. The Expert Advisory Group reserves the right to negotiate with relevant PIs over project costs and potentially seek to combine them into larger solutions-focused programmes.

A total of \$750,000 is available in this round, with that sum in total spread over up to 3 years.

Successful projects will be funded from 1 January 2021 and run for the appropriate time period from this date.

<b>Key Dates For 2020</b>	
Request for Proposals issued	18 <sup>th</sup> September 2020
RfP Workshop	7 <sup>th</sup> October, 12 noon – 1pm room 690
Closing date	<b>1pm Friday 16<sup>th</sup> October 2020</b>
Evaluation	28 <sup>th</sup> October – 30 <sup>th</sup> November 2020
Results Announced	Mid December 2020
Project start date after	1 January 2021

### **Contact**

Amy Weir, Research Programme Manager

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## Submission

The application is submitted via an online form. This can be found via the below link. You will receive a confirmation email notification once you have submitted it.

[GMCNE Online Application Form](#)

## Reporting Requirements

If awarded the GMCNE requires a formal progress report every 6 months. These reports feed into key GMCNE presentations and reports, such as progress reports for the Board. We also may ask you for brief updates or stories on your projects so we can keep our website up to date and active.

Successful recipients of GMCNE funding may be asked to present their project findings at a Research Symposium, meetings or events arranged by the GMCNE.

**Final Report:** A written report on the research project should be submitted to GMCNE email by the researcher within one month of the expiry date of the funding award.