

# Proposal for Re-shaping of the Governance Structure for the Academy

The Royal Society of New Zealand Act sets out that there is a “Council” as the governing body of the broad-based body, and an Academy Executive Committee (AEC), as the governing body for things related to the Academy and Fellowship. The roles ascribed to the AEC are to recognise and encourage excellence and outstanding achievements in each of the areas of science, technology, and the humanities; and contribute to the intellectual leadership role of the Society.

The present AEC is comprised as follows:

- Three Vice-Presidents, who also serve on Council, elected by three electoral colleges comprising both Fellows and Constituent Organisations in:
  - Humanities and social sciences,
  - Biological and life sciences, and
  - Physical and mathematical sciences, technology and engineering.
- Up to three other Fellows elected on to the Council by other electoral colleges which may or may not include Fellows,
- Up to three Fellows co-opted by the AEC itself.
- The chair is held by a Vice-President and changed annually.

The Council has been considering restructuring of the Council and that cannot really proceed without impacting the AEC. The primary driver for change is to ensure that the Council has sufficient diversity, and in particular includes Māori and early career researcher perspectives. The rethink of the Council structure provides an opportunity to address some disadvantages of the present AEC structure:

- The governing body for the Academy is presently not just a matter for the Fellows,
- The annual change of Chair is not good for continuity,
- There is no designated Deputy Chair if the Chair is unavailable,
- The role of the Chair has to be taken on without relief from the other roles of a Vice-President, and
- In practice co-option has proven necessary to get wide disciplinary coverage.

To ensure coherent governance the Council and Academy Executive Committee (AEC) do need to be interlinked. A proposed new governance model has been developed, with the intention that this be implemented progressively from 2019. Both the AEC and Council structure are set in the General Rules of the Society, which are approved by the Council, but the Council and current AEC want to ensure that the Fellowship is supportive of the proposed change.

Commencing on 1 July 2019 the proposed long term structure of the two bodies, intended to be set out in General Rules timetabled for approval by the Council on 20 February 2019, is as follows:

Council	Academy Executive Committee
President	
President-elect - one year in three	Observer (if a Fellow) – one year in three
Chair of Academy Executive Committee	
Deputy Chair of Academy Executive Committee	
Councillor appointed by Branches	(Domain) Convenor for Humanities
Councillor elected by Constituent Organisations	(Domain) Convenor for Social and Behavioural Sciences
Councillor elected by individual members who are not Fellows	(Domain) Convenor for Biological and Environmental Sciences
Councillor elected by Early Career Researchers	(Domain) Convenor for Physical, Earth and Mathematical Sciences
Councillor bringing Māori researcher perspective	(Domain) Convenor for Medical and Health Sciences
Councillor bringing Māori researcher perspective	(Domain) Convenor for Technology, Applied Science and Engineering (TASE)
Co-opted Councillor (optional)	Co-opted member (optional)
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A key element is that the election of the AEC will become a matter for the Fellows alone. The Academy will be organised into six domain-based Colleges (rather than three), each of which elects a Convenor for the domain, each Convenor being elected for a three-year term with terms staggered so two come due each year. The six Colleges/domains are:

- Humanities,
- Social and behavioural sciences,
- Biological and environmental sciences,
- Physical, earth and mathematical sciences,
- Medical and health sciences, and
- Technology, applied sciences and engineering (TASE)

These domains were chosen to map reasonably accurately to the five academies operating in Australia (Humanities, Social Sciences; Medical and Health Sciences, Technology and Engineering; and Sciences - except we split sciences into two colleges/domains), and the structure also similarly mimics the UK academies based in London. These are already our six evaluation panel domains for Fellowship. In this model, each Convenor has responsibility internally, but might also build strategic relationships externally – for example, a relationship with the Council of Medical Colleges might be advantageous for the Convenor for medical and health sciences.

Under the legislation the President is not required to be a Fellow but that is the norm in practice. The two lead roles in the AEC (Chair and Deputy Chair) must be Fellows, and so it is intended there be at least three Fellows who serve on both Council and the AEC. The Chair and Deputy Chair will be elected for three year terms, and the proposal is that they be elected by the existing AEC, augmented by any other Fellows on Council. These are important leadership positions, and the view is that the Fellows serving on the AEC and Council know best who will be able to perform these duties from amongst those Fellows who have served recently as a Domain Convenor.

To ensure that each of these roles is held for about the same length of time by persons from each of the six domains:

- Each newly elected Chair/Deputy Chair must be from a different domain to the incumbent completing their term
- Each newly elected Chair/Deputy Chair must be from a different domain to the incumbent in the other Chair/Deputy chair role
- In identifying candidates for both roles there must be regard to:
  - the need, over a period of time, for the two roles to be shared across the six domains,
  - the benefits of the Chair and Deputy Chair being from a different domain to the incumbent President and President-elect.

Allowance for cooption of up to two further AEC members, if needed, to ensure sufficient diversity will continue.

In regard to the rest of the Council, the Society has organisational members (Branches and Constituent Organisations), individual members who are not Fellows, early career researchers, and a growing desire to partner with the Māori research community. Each of these types of member will vote for one Council position, but these Councillors do not serve on the AEC in the proposed structure.

The proposed transitional arrangement in 2019 is that six Convenors will be elected, (two for each of one, two and three year terms to establish the staggering). There will be two Vice-Presidents still with time to serve in their terms and these people would transfer to the Chair and Deputy Chair of the AEC. The President is a Fellow and will thus also be on the AEC.

In summary, the proposal:

- ensures domain coverage,
- provides continuity around the role of the Chair of the AEC,
- places the responsibility for determining the AEC membership on the Fellowship alone, and
- manages the load of the Chair and Deputy Chair.

If Fellows wish to comment please send an email to our Executive Officer, Gill Sutherland ([Gill.Sutherland@royalsociety.org.nz](mailto:Gill.Sutherland@royalsociety.org.nz)) by 5 November 2018 and she will collate the responses for consideration by the Council and AEC.

**Professor Richard Blaikie**  
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Chief Executive

25 October 2018