

Pacific academy of sciences



A Pacific academy of sciences (working title) aims to unify and recognize Pacific scholars and their research, and to inform international decisions about the region.

The academy will represent the Pacific’s cultural diversity as well as its broad range of natural and social disciplines, and encourage science education in every form. The academy will complement the work of existing scientific, academic and diplomatic bodies and be ethical, transparent and inclusive, embracing the ‘Pacific Way’ of open dialogue, mutual respect and close cooperation.

What is an Academy of Science?

An academy is an organization typically dedicated to the advancement of sciences

and humanities through research, education, and public outreach. These academies often consist of elected members who are distinguished scholars in their respective fields. They may conduct research, publish research, provide guidance on policy matters, and promote sciences and humanities.

Academies can vary in scope and focus, ranging from national academies that advise governments and other decision makers on matters to specialized academies that concentrate on specific disciplines or areas of study. Examples include the African Academy of Sciences, Australian Academy of Science, the Royal Society Te Aparangi (New Zealand), National Academy of Sciences in the United States, the Royal Society in the United Kingdom, and the Chinese Academy of Sciences.

The Pacific scholars and delegates at the two-day meeting in Samoa that looked at the establishment of a Pacific academy of sciences.

(Photo: Soonalote Eti)

Why does the Pacific want to establish an academy of sciences?

There is currently no formal mechanism for Pacific scholars across the region to collectively use their knowledge to inform decision-making regionally and internationally, even though the Pacific region stands to be most impacted by the rapidly changing environment.

Local scientists and Indigenous communities possess unique knowledge about their respective regions, environments and inhabitants. The establishment of a Pacific academy responds to the pressing need to foster co-creation of knowledge to empower Pacific scholars to be part of solutions in their region.

The establishment of a Pacific academy of sciences will be a global testament and a commitment by the Pacific region to promote sustainable development through scholarly activities providing interdisciplinary approaches to complex problems, offering scientific advice to governments and other decision makers as well as informing public policy for the benefit of Pacific communities.

How did the decision to have a Pacific academy come about?

In October 2023, the International Science Council (ISC) supported by the ISC Regional Focal Point for Asia and the Pacific, partnered with the National University of Samoa, with support from the Sasakawa Peace Foundation and the Richard

Lounsbery Foundation to facilitate a discussion in Apia, Samoa about a possible academy of sciences for the Pacific region, to listen to local needs and aspirations, and to help strengthen the regional voice of science.

After two days of discussion, hearing from experiences in other regions including the African Academy of Sciences, Australian Academy of Science, the Royal Society Te Aparangi (New Zealand) and U.S. National Academies, the meeting of more than 60 Pacific scholars overwhelmingly agreed to join forces to create a voice for science in the Pacific by establishing a Pacific academy of sciences¹.

What will a Pacific academy of sciences look like?

The Pacific academy will be domiciled in Samoa, where it will be supported by a small secretariat to facilitate the operations of the academy. It will establish a hub for scholars, researchers, experts and Indigenous knowledge holders from diverse scientific and humanities disciplines from across the region to collaborate on programmes of work and provide science advice to support global and regional efforts to address the most pressing needs of the Pacific and other regions of the world.

When will it be established?

The Establishment Committee is working toward launching the academy in the last quarter of 2024 after which the secretariat will be established.

Where will the funds come from to support an academy?

The mechanism for ongoing funding for an academy will be determined as part of the establishment process.

Who will be able to become a member and how?

Guidelines on membership will be developed by the governing body of the academy once it is established.

Governance (Who will govern the academy? What will the election process be?)

The academy will be established as a charitable trust under Samoan law. A Board of Trustees will be formed for the registration of the Trust in Samoa. A selection committee (a subcommittee of the Establishment Committee) will appoint Founding Fellows (members) and trustees who will go on to form the first governing Council. The Council will develop guidelines on the appointment of additional Fellows, the scope of work, and how the academy will operate.

Media contact

Aleta Johnston

Aleta.Johnston@council.science

Zhenya Tsoy

Zhenya.Tsoy@council.science

council.science/pacific-academy



¹ **Pacific Establishment Committee Co-Chairs:** Sir Collin Tukuitonga, University of Auckland; Prof. Teatulohi Matainaho, Pacific Adventist University, Papua New Guinea.

Committee Members: Dr Vomaranda Joy Botleng, Vanuatu; Robert Karoro, Kiribati; Dr Eric Katovai, Solomon Islands National University; Prof. Sushil Kumar, The University of the South Pacific, Fiji; Peseta Dr. Desmond Mene Lee Hang, National University of Samoa; Salote Nasalo, The University of the South Pacific; Prof. Steven Ratuva, University of Canterbury; Prof. Ora Renagi, Papua New Guinea University of Technology; Prof Catherine Ris, University of New Caledonia; Merita Tuari'i, Te Puna Vai Mārama, Cook Islands Research Centre.