

## CO-ORDINATED CUTS IDEA SHOT DOWN

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The Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) declined a suggestion by Te Herenga Waka- Victoria University of Wellington's vice-chancellor which aimed to co- ordinate proposed course cuts across it and Otago University.

During staff forums this week, it was revealed 230 jobs had been identified for redundancy following a review as the university worked to overcome a \$33 million deficit.

This followed other efforts such as a pause on all capital expenditure projects, and approaching the commission, which provides and administers funding for universities in relation to student enrolments.

Vice-chancellor Nic Smith approached the TEC earlier this month regarding the possibility of "co-ordinating offerings" between universities, specifically between Victoria and Otago (where hundreds of jobs are also set to go), as a way of retaining capability in the sector and the country.

He asked if there was the potential for increased funding of co-ordinated offerings, in areas deemed valuable to retain, to ensure retaining these offerings was financially viable.

In response, he was reportedly advised by the TEC that there was no flexibility in the current system to support ways for institutions to collaborate. Smith described the response as "disappointing".

He said the TEC said any changes to the current funding model would need to be part of a broader review of higher education funding, something that would need to be supported by the Minister of Education.

"The current system effectively incentivises universities to cut the same courses and compete in the same subject areas, with no co- ordination or collaboration between institutions," Smith said.

"I was really hoping that the TEC would at least be open to a conversation around what funding mechanisms could support capability being retained in a more co-ordinated way, to benefit students and achieve economies of scale and thus savings at a sector level."

Tertiary Education Union branch president at Victoria University of Wellington Dougal McNeill also expressed concerns about similar cuts being made, like the disestablishment of German at both Victoria and Otago.

Tertiary Education Commission acting chief executive Gillian Dudgeon said it had advised Smith an "immediate change in the funding system" was not within its power.

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