

## Selection of Topics for the Next Rounds

### 1. Background

On March 14, 2010, the Israeli Government passed a resolution adopting the "Israeli Centers for Research Excellence" (I-CORE) program (see its full version at <http://www.che.org.il/>). The main goal of the program is to strengthen scientific research in Israel and bring back young Israeli scientists currently working abroad, by establishing up to thirty I-COREs with a total 5-year budget of about 1.5 billion shekels. I-COREs are defined as associations of excellent researchers, both standing Faculty and new recruits, in designated scientific fields, for the purpose of advancing cutting-edge research in those fields in Israel.

The first four I-COREs (the pilot phase) are planned to start operating in March, 2011. Full proposals for establishing them have already been submitted, and are currently under review by international scientific committees. We are now in the process of drawing conclusions from this first pilot cycle, in preparation for the next rounds of I-COREs, which are planned to be established during the coming academic years 2011/12 and 2012/13.

The areas for the next rounds of I-COREs should genuinely represent promising and exciting topics, which figure prominently in the research agenda of the Israeli scientific community at large. Thus, the process of identifying the next I-CORE topics will be wide open, allowing for the participation of **all** Israeli researchers who wish to contribute (including those temporarily residing abroad). We strongly encourage the academic community in Israel to devote careful consideration to this important endeavor, leading to the submission of worthy suggestions. We stress that suggestions are welcome in **any** academic discipline.

The topics thus suggested for the next rounds of I-CORE will be reviewed by the I-CORE Steering Committee, in a well-structured process. Final decisions will be made by the I-CORE Steering Committee.

The research topics for the 2011/12 rounds of I-COREs will be announced by April 2011, and soon after Calls for Proposals for establishing the new I-COREs will be issued.

### 2. The I-CORE Program Objectives

- i. Strengthening scientific research in Israel, thereby establishing Israel as a recognized world leader in scientific research;
- ii. Bringing excellent researchers to Israel, as a central means for reinforcing the research community in the country's institutes of higher education;
- iii. Creating a critical mass of researchers in promising fields, thus strengthening the comparative advantage in those fields within Israeli research institutions;

- iv. Improving and upgrading research infrastructure at Israeli universities;
- v. Encouraging academic innovation, particularly in terms of interdisciplinary research.
- vi. Promoting the establishment of graduate teaching programs in the selected fields, having an international orientation;
- vii. Fostering academic interactions and collaborations among Israel's institutes of higher education, both among universities and colleges.

### **3. Researchers Submitting Suggestions for Future I-CORE Topics:**

A proposal for a research topic for future I-COREs may be submitted by any group of at least three Israeli researchers, at least one of them having a full time senior faculty position in an Israeli institution of higher education.

### **4. The Basic Requirements for a Suggested I-CORE Topic:**

In order for a research topic to qualify as a plausible theme for a future I-CORE, it must fulfill the following criteria:

- i. The topic should reflect **significant ongoing research activity** in several academic institutions in Israel. Alternatively, it could be a topic where current research capabilities are deficient, but there is a clear, well defined national need to upgrade them, and (ii) below applies.
- ii. The topic should have the **potential** to lead to cutting-edge research in the field.
- iii. The topic should be **focused** enough to allow for genuine collaboration and clear synergy between its members; yet it should **not be too narrow**, so as to allow for researchers with complementary expertise to take part in it, thereby promoting multi-disciplinary research.
- iv. The **target number of researchers** involved in the proposed I-CORE may vary according to the characteristics of the area, as manifested, *inter alia*, in (iii) above. However, the **expected range** would be 15-30 researchers per center (including both current faculty and new recruits).

Please note that a suggested research topic may be in any academic discipline (Humanities, Social Sciences, Natural Sciences, Formal Sciences, Applied Sciences, Interdisciplinary, etc.)

### **5. Suggestions for new topics:**

Such suggestions (up to two pages, total) should include the following information:

1. Short **description** of the suggested research topic;
2. Short overview of **current research activity** in the proposed field in Israeli institutions, its strengths, weaknesses and potential, compared to leading international efforts elsewhere in the world;
3. The **expected contribution** of an I-CORE in this topic:
  - a. To basic research in the proposed and adjacent fields;
  - b. To strengthening the field of research in Israel, and promoting Israel's position as a potential leader in the area;
  - c. To the Israeli economy, culture, and society at large.

#### **6. Submitting the Suggestions:**

Forms for suggested research topics can be found through [this link](#) and should be submitted via this website no later than February 28, 2011.

Please feel free to contact [I-CORE@che.org.il](mailto:I-CORE@che.org.il) if you have any further questions or comments.