Procedure

Conducting research with Department for Education staff, students and data

Please note this procedure is mandatory and staff are required to adhere to the content.

Summary

This procedure describes how the Department for Education will assess and approve the undertaking of research and evaluation with:

- the Department workforce
- children and young people under the Department’s care
- the Department’s administrative data
- the families of children and young people who are to be approached through the Department

Table 1 - Document details

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Publication date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>File number</td>
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<td>Related legislation</td>
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| Related policies, procedures, guidelines, standards, frameworks | Research and Evaluation policy  
Data Access and Transfer procedure  
Information Privacy Principles Instruction  
National Statement on the Ethical Conduct of Human Research |
<p>| Version | 2.7 |
| Replaces | 2.6 |
| Policy officer (position) | Manager, Strategic Data Development |
| Policy officer (phone) | 8204 1262 |
| Policy sponsor (position) | Director, Data, Reporting and Analytics |
| Executive director responsible (position and office) | Executive Director, System Performance |
| Applies to | Departmental staff, researchers, external agencies or research organisations |
| Key words | Research, Research Application, Ethics, Consent |</p>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status</th>
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<tr>
<td>Approved by</td>
<td>Executive Director, System Performance</td>
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Table of Contents

1. Title ....................................................................................................................................................... 5
2. Purpose ................................................................................................................................................. 5
3. Scope .................................................................................................................................................... 5
4. Procedure detail ................................................................................................................................... 6
   4.1 Applications to undertake research ................................................................................................. 6
   4.2 Conduct of research ........................................................................................................................ 7
5. Roles and responsibilities .................................................................................................................... 8
6. Monitoring, evaluation and review ......................................................................................................... 9
7. Definitions and abbreviations ............................................................................................................... 9
8. Supporting documents ........................................................................................................................... 9
9. References ............................................................................................................................................ 9
1. Title
Conducting research with Department for Education staff, students and data

2. Purpose
These procedures describe how the Department for Education will assess and approve the undertaking of research that involves:

- the Department for Education workforce
- children and young people under the Department for Education’s care
- the Department for Education’s administrative data
- the families of children and young people who are to be approached through the Department.

This procedure is to be used in conjunction with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research regarding the design, review and conduct of research.

3. Scope
This procedure applies to research carried out by research organisations, education providers, student researchers, independent researchers, Department for Education employees and other individuals or external agencies who seek access to research participants on Department for Education sites and/or administrative data held by the department. Sites may include:

- Childcare Centres
- Family Day Care
- Out of School Hours Care
- Preschools
- Schools
- Corporate sites

This procedure does not apply to:

- Independent schools, Catholic schools or other non-government education sites
- the Child and Family Health Service (CaFHS) – CaFHS related research is governed by the Women’s and Children’s Health Network (WCHN) processes with applications to be managed through its Research Secretariat
- Research that involves surveys, observations or the evaluation of educational programs or practices by a current Department for Education site leader, staff member or university students undertaking a teaching placement within their own or neighbouring sites. Research matching this description must be approved by the relevant Principal, Director or site manager.

If you are uncertain about whether you need to submit an application, please contact the Data, Reporting and Analytics Directorate via email at Education.ResearchUnit@sa.gov.au.
4. Procedure detail

4.1 Applications to undertake research

Research projects require formal applications for approval

Projects will only be considered and approved if a formal application is submitted.

The online application form and any associated material will be publicly available on the Department for Education website.

The format of and information required by the online application form may be modified as required, subject to the approval of the Director, Data, Reporting and Analytics.

Expressions of interest and advice prior to formal submission

Applicants may submit a shorter Expression of Interest as part of the online application form for initial feedback or advice prior to submission of a full application and/or university Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) application, if required.

Review applications to conduct research

Applications will be reviewed by the Data, Reporting and Analytics Directorate. Advice from other Department for Education units will be sought where relevant.

Reviews of applications will be made with National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research and applicable legislation and departmental policies. Reviews of applications will consider:

- the potential value of new information to be gained from the research;
- the work load required from the Department for Education and young people in participating;
- the potential risk for harm, discomfort or inconvenience to result from participating, including threats to privacy and confidentiality.1

Applications will be reviewed against the information requested within the online application form. Applicants may be requested to supply further information if:

- the steps required of the Department for Education staff and/or participants for the research project to proceed are not clear;
- there is not a clear logic statement as to how the research will produce knowledge which will then lead to benefits for children; and/or
- there is insufficient information to determine that the research proposed is necessary in the context of previous research (where possible, applications should include a summary of previous research, the quality of evidence and the remaining gaps in the evidence).

Any proposal assessed to involve more than “low risk” to participants will not be approved without a copy of a final approval letter from a HREC.

The Department for Education will consider the terms of approval for a project issued by any recognised HREC. Notwithstanding approval from an HREC, the Department for Education may still determine not to approve a project or require additional conditions/modifications before the project may proceed.

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1 Refer to the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research for definitions of types of harm, discomfort and inconvenience, and definitions.
Approval of applications to conduct research

Applications may be approved to proceed, approved to proceed subject to specified conditions or modifications to the project, or not approved to proceed. Where applications are not approved, a summary of the reasons for this decision must be provided in writing to the applicant.

Approval provides the researcher with the authority to approach principals, directors or site managers of Department for Education sites to invite them to participate in a research study. The final decision as to whether or not the research proceeds at a specific site will be made by the relevant principal, director or site manager.

Modifications or extensions to already approved projects

Minor modifications to an already approved project may be approved by the Director, Data, Reporting and Analytics.

Minor amendments must not result in a foreseeable increase in the risk of harm to participants or workload or burden to participants or Department for Education staff.

A formal resubmission of a full application form is not required for a minor amendment. An email or letter should be sent to Education.ResearchUnit@sa.gov.au, describing the rationale for the change, precisely what changes are necessary and any resulting impact on the risks to participants and the workload associated with participation.

Resubmission

Applicants may resubmit an application. The resubmission should be accompanied by a covering note describing any relevant changes to the original application, including how any feedback from the Department for Education have been incorporated.

Appeal against decision

Applicants may request that a decision regarding their application is reviewed. In this case, the Department for Education will ask a senior officer to review the information provided in the application against this procedure and any other relevant policies. This senior officer will not have been directly involved in the original decision.

4.2 Conduct of research

Consent to participate in research

Express, opt-in consent from participants, and where relevant, their guardians, should be sought wherever practical. For consent to participate in research, it is not a requirement that researchers use a specific departmental template.

Alternative forms of consent (eg implied consent, opt-out consent), will be considered on a case by case basis with reference to the criteria set out in the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research.

Participants and parents/guardians must be provided with sufficient information to enable informed consent. Consent documentation should include the project title, description of purpose, benefits to the Department for Education, description of research activities, expected duration of participation, assurances of confidentiality and anonymity, statement about voluntary participation and withdrawal, description of foreseeable risks, separate consent for audio/video-taping, details of support in the case of stress or adverse effects, possible outcomes of the research and the likely form of the research findings. Where the research involves questions of a specific or sensitive nature, the consent documentation must clearly disclose this information.
Participation must be voluntary. It must not involve any inducement, coercion, pressure or deception to participate. Individuals who elect not to participate must not be required to give a reason for their decision. Participants must also be entitled to withdraw from the research at any stage, including any data they have contributed.

**Child Safety**

Researchers visiting or participating in Department for Education sites or services must abide by the requirements of the [Screening and suitability – Child safety policy](#), including obtaining and maintaining appropriate criminal history screening and reporting inappropriate conduct towards or affecting children and young people.

### 5. Roles and responsibilities

Table 2 - Roles and responsibilities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Authority/responsibility for</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Researcher</td>
<td>• To submit the online research application in accordance with the requirements outlines in this procedure</td>
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<td>• To conduct research in a manner consistent with this procedure</td>
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<tr>
<td>Manager, Strategic Data Development</td>
<td>• Manage the research approval process including the administration, coordination, liaison of externally and internally initiated research</td>
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<td>• Assess whether research proposals meet the requirements outlined in this procedure</td>
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<td>• Ensure that relevant Senior Executive Group members are advised of research projects that may materially impact on staff</td>
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<td>• Review this procedure as required</td>
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<tr>
<td>Director, Data, Reporting and Analytics</td>
<td>• Approval of minor amendments or modifications to approved research projects</td>
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<tr>
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<td>• Approval of proposed changes to the online application form</td>
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<tr>
<td>Executive Director, System Performance</td>
<td>• Approval of research projects submitted to the Department for Education</td>
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6. Monitoring, evaluation and review

This procedure will be reviewed by the Manager, Strategic Data Development three years after the approval date unless changes are required prior to the review date.

7. Definitions and abbreviations

Not applicable.

8. Supporting documents

Links to other research, legislation and departmental guidelines and policies:

- Legislation applicable to the Department for Education
  - Children’s Services Act 1985
  - Education Act 1972

- Other legislation relevant to the Department for Education
  - Children’s Protection Act 1993
  - Family and Community Services Act 1972

- The Department for Education policies and procedures

9. References

- National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (updated 2018)
- Data access and transfer procedure
- Screening and suitability – Child safety policy