

# Conducting Research in Tasmanian Government Educational Settings Procedure

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## 1. Purpose

This procedure applies to all applications to conduct research in Tasmanian Government educational settings and all Department of Education (DoE) employees. This procedure sets out a consistent approach, informing applicants of the required process and the factors considered by the DoE Research Application Approval Committee (the Committee) when reviewing applications.

## 2. Overview

Permission to conduct research in Tasmanian Government educational settings is a departmental requirement. Proposals should demonstrate that the research would be of benefit to the education of students and/or their teachers.

Approval to conduct research in Tasmanian Government educational settings does not imply that the research has the support or endorsement of DoE. A letter of approval from Education Performance and Review (EPR) gives permission for the researcher to approach the principal of an educational setting, but it does not guarantee that the principal will agree to participate.

Educational settings are under no obligation to participate in research studies, however, many of them appreciate the benefits that can flow from such research and are willing to participate.

## 3. Roles and Responsibilities

EPR is responsible for convening the Research Application Approval Committee (the Committee) to oversee the approval process.

The Committee ensures that the proposed research:

- complies with the guidelines
- does not impose undue burden on schools/colleges and principals

### 3.1 Research Applicant

The research applicant **must**:

- Provide DoE with the appropriate information
- Ensure that the proposed research will be of benefit to students and schools.
- Complete a [Data Information Access and Disclosure Proforma](#) (DIADP) if requesting access to unpublished DoE data
- Have written approval from DoE prior to approaching school principals/managers
- Obtain the explicit permission of the principal(s)/manager prior to commencing research
- Ensure that letters, questionnaires and forms are written in plain language
- Ensure that parents/carers/students/learners have been provided with enough information to make an informed decision regarding their participation in the study
- Ensure that participants in the study are aware that their participation is voluntary and they can withdraw at any time

- Not offer any inappropriate incentives to schools or individuals for their participation in the study
- Have active consent for participation from parents/ carers/adult students prior to commencing the study
- Ensure the confidentiality of information and provide assurance of this to schools/sites and those participating in the research
- Ensure the anonymity of all responses
- Ensure minimal disruption to educational settings
- Provide a report to EPR and to participating educational settings within six months of completion of research project.

### **3.2 Education Performance and Review (EPR)**

EPR is to:

- Convene the Research Application Approval Committee
- Consider the completed application within eight weeks of receipt
- Establish clear procedures and guidelines for consideration of all research proposals in DoE educational settings
- Ensure that the proposal complies with guidelines and existing policies and procedures
- Publish a list of approved research proposals.

### **3.3 Principals/Managers**

The Principal or Manager of an educational setting that is approached by a research applicant **must**:

- Ensure that the research applicant has received the letter of approval from the DoE Research Application Approval Committee
- Ensure that relevant consent forms are completed prior to the commencement of the research
- Ensure that the researcher adheres to the correct Workplace Health and Safety procedures
- Ensure that student records held by the school are not available for research purposes.

## 4. Process

These guidelines have been designed to provide guidance both for prospective researchers and for the staff in the educational settings in which they wish to conduct research:

- for researchers, it is a guide to ensure that the research they propose meets the requirements of DoE
- for educational settings, it is a means of assessing whether or not to participate in proposed research.

Collection of data from educational settings must not commence until approval has been received. Applications must be made on the appropriate [form](#).

Requests made on behalf of students associated with educational institutions should be submitted by their supervisors.

### Approval to conduct research in Tasmanian Government educational settings

Consideration will only be given to submissions with all the required documentation provided:

- Application form for permission to conduct research in Tasmanian government educational settings with signed Declaration:
- a copy of Ethics Approval from the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) at the relevant institution
- a copy of each researcher's Tasmanian Registration to Work with Vulnerable People
- copies of letter to principal, consent forms, relevant research materials, etc.

### Registration to work with vulnerable people

All researchers intending to work in Tasmanian educational settings must have Registration to work with Vulnerable People (RWVP).

The process for applying or renewing RWVP can be found here:

<https://cbos.tas.gov.au/topics/licensing-and-registration/registrations/work-with-vulnerable-people>

Interstate and overseas applicants are to refer to the following process: <https://cbos.tas.gov.au/topics/licensing-and-registration/registrations/work-with-vulnerable-people/applications/interstate-and-overseas-applicants>

### Access to DoE data

Researchers wishing to access data already residing with DoE can refer to the following site for information:

<https://www.education.tas.gov.au/about-us/our-department/where-to-find-data/>

To apply for access to unpublished data, complete the [Data Information Access and Disclosure Proforma](#) (DIADP) and submit this alongside the Research application.

## Selection of educational settings and obtaining permission

Research proposals should nominate the educational setting(s) in which they wish to conduct research. Due to the increasing number of requests to conduct research in educational settings, approval will be given to proposals that request the involvement of a smaller number of targeted educational settings unless exceptional circumstances exist. It is recommended that drawing a random sample of educational settings will provide sufficient data.

If educational settings, other than those initially nominated, need to be approached to provide sufficient data, then permission must be sought from EPR to include additional locations, prior to contacting the additional educational settings.

The researcher should prepare a letter that seeks permission from principals to conduct research in their educational setting. This letter should explain the purpose of the research as well as the level of involvement. A copy of this letter should be included with the application. Once approval to conduct research is given, the letter together with copies of consent forms, plain language statements, and instruments should be forwarded to the nominated principals.

## Minimising disruption to educational settings

The principal and staff of an educational setting are best placed to judge the likely degree of disruption to the educational program. The researcher must consider ways of ensuring that data collection procedures (for example, the administration of tests or questionnaires) cause minimal disruption to school/college activities. It is expected that researchers will discuss these matters with principals and teachers and ensure that timeframes are appropriate given the context.

## Informed consent

For research purposes, DoE requires active consent. DoE's position is that legally, failure to return a form, which the parent may not have received, does not prove 'consent' in a legal sense should any issues arise.

The principles of informed consent must be upheld by researchers as an integral part of planning the data collection process. Within this context, it is expected that in the majority of cases, written consent will be obtained from parents/carers of students under the age of 18 and from students 18 years or over. If any variation is considered necessary this should be made clear in the research application. To ensure that consent is informed, researchers should prepare a plain language information sheet for distribution to parents/carers and adult students and this should also be submitted to EPR with the research application.

The overall principles that should be adhered to when providing information should be that:

- parents/carers/students should be given enough information to make an informed decision about whether or not to participate in the proposed research
- respondents are made aware of the voluntary nature of participation in the study
- respondents are made aware that they will retain the right to withdraw from participation in the study
- active consent is required from parents, carers and participants before research can be undertaken
- the process of informing and gaining consent from DoE personnel must be similar to that described for students.

## Confidentiality of information

Individual respondents must remain anonymous, as should their responses. The researcher should maintain confidentiality of information and provide assurances of this to educational settings and respondents.

It is usual practice that student records held by the educational setting are not available for research purposes. A researcher would have to have exceptional reasons for seeking information from student records and must take into account the legality of the request being made. Where limited access to such records is granted by DoE, principals must also grant permission, and parental/student consent is always required.

## Relevance of research

Consideration should be given to the usefulness and relevance of the proposed study. In general, approval will not be given for research that does not have direct educational implications and/or other specific benefits to students and teachers. EPR reserves the right to consider proposals in the light of both the needs of educational settings and DoE priorities.

## Feedback and involvement

It is a DoE requirement that a report be provided to EPR on the outcomes of research conducted. There is also an expectation that feedback will be provided to those educational settings participating in the research through a formal report, and through sharing insights and findings with students, parents/carers and teachers involved.

In addition, gaining feedback, both positive and negative, from those locations involved in the research is a valuable basis for planning future research.

## Notification

Researchers should allow eight weeks for their requests to be considered. If a delay occurs, it would be appropriate for researchers to contact EPR.

Once DoE approval has been granted for research to proceed, researchers must advise EPR of any subsequent changes in circumstances.

If the data obtained from the primary research is to be put to any other use than that described in the approved research application a new application will need to be made to EPR.

When permission to conduct research is not approved, or permission is dependent on amendments being made to the research proposal, the researcher can seek additional feedback from EPR. It is the researcher's responsibility to provide EPR with all additional information.

Projects that run for more than three years must be re-submitted for approval by 31 January of each subsequent year of the project. A progress report should also be submitted at this time. This process is to ensure that re-approval has been sought from relevant ethics committees, that the proposal still meets DoE guidelines, and to monitor changes in circumstances that may have occurred in that time.

## 5. Related policies

- Nil.

## 6. Related procedures

- Nil.

## 7. Supporting information/websites

- Research in Government Schools
- National Projects – Applications to Conduct Research in Schools
- Research Application Form – Tasmanian Government Schools
- The Information Access and Disclosure Proforma
- Where to find data
- National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research 2007

## 8. Legislation

- [Education Act 2016](#)



## 9. Definitions

### Research

An investigation or study that is undertaken for the purpose of developing new or collating existing knowledge to improve the understanding of the work of educational settings and students' learning and wellbeing.

### Research Applicant

Person(s) who request to undertake the investigation or study within schools. This person may be an undergraduate or academic of a tertiary institution; current teacher or external organisation

### Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC)

HRECs review research proposals that involve human participants to ensure that they meet ethical standards and guidelines, including the [National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research 2007](#).

### Meaning of "must", "is to" and "may":

- the word "must" is to be construed as being mandatory; and
- the words "is to" and "are to" are to be construed as being directory; and
- the word "may" is to be construed as being discretionary or enabling, as the context requires.

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**This Document Replaced:** Research in Tasmanian Government Educational Settings Procedure; Guidelines for Conducting Research