

Standards for Ethical Research Practice

Introduction

High quality evidence gathered through research informs how we do our work and helps us target investments to continually improve our policies, decisions and to lift educational outcomes.

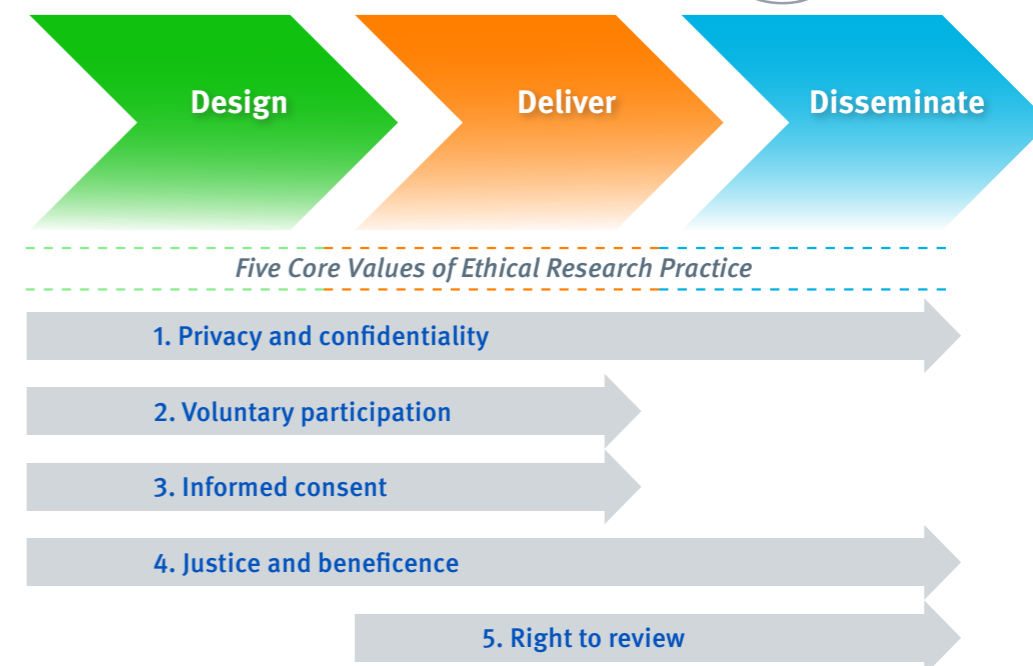
The Standards for Ethical Research Practice set out the department's expectations of researchers so that evidence is generated appropriately and respectfully, in accordance with the highest ethical standards. The standards identify the core requirements of ethical practice design, delivery and reporting of research involving the department's sites, students or employees.

The Standards for Ethical Research Practice:

- provide an ethical framework across all phases of the research activity cycle, aligned to the National Health and Medical Research Council's (NHMRC) [National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research](#) (NSECHE) and the [Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research](#);

- complement the [Standards of Evidence](#) as the other foundation of the [Evidence Framework](#); and
- are an essential element of the department's five Research Principles within its [Research Plan](#).

The Standards for Ethical Research Practice apply to studies undertaken by departmental staff or external researchers on departmental sites, while recognising that the legislative responsibilities of internal and external researchers can differ. Consistent with the NSECHE, the standards are underpinned by five core values of ethical research: informed consent, voluntary participation, privacy and confidentiality, justice and beneficence, and right to review. Through the application of the standards, researchers demonstrate that they recognise their ethical responsibilities to respect and protect all participants from harm and ensure participants and the department benefit from involvement in research.



Glossary

Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research – Describes the principles and practices for the responsible conduct of research, for institutions and researchers, and provides a framework for dealing with allegations of misconduct.

Beneficence – Researchers should have the welfare of the participant as the ultimate goal of the research. This concept implies that the research should be doing good or benefitting the participant rather than just not doing harm.

Code of conduct – The Code of Conduct for the Queensland Public Service is underpinned by the ethical principles of: integrity and impartiality, promoting the public good, commitment to the system of government, and accountability and transparency.

Departmental sites – Education-related facilities that are the responsibility of this department, which includes but is not limited to state schools, environmental education centres, early childhood education services, and central and regional offices.

End-user – The ultimate target group for whom the research outcomes will apply. In educational research, common end-users include educators, school leaders, policy makers and learners.

Evidence Framework – Supports the generation of better evidence and the rigour with which we examine evidence. The framework defines four sources of evidence that serve to strengthen our capacity to use, critique and generate evidence. These sources are: practice and innovation, evaluation, data and analysis, and research.

Guidelines for conducting research – Describes processes pertaining to research on Queensland departmental sites and guides prospective researchers in preparing a research application to the department. To be used in conjunction with the Standards for Ethical Research Practice and the Terms and Conditions for Conducting Research.

Human Research Ethics Committees (HREC) – Are tasked with providing ethical oversight of research by reviewing research proposals that include human participants against relevant standards.

Informed consent – Requires participants (and their parents for minors) to sign and return a form, prior to the research activity, if they consent for themselves (or their child) to participate.

Justice and beneficence – The benefits of research are achieved through just means and outweigh potential risks, and there are mechanisms to deal adequately with any harm or discomfort that may occur as a result of research participation.

National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research – Guides and influences the way research with humans is conducted and managed with emphasis placed on responsibilities and accountabilities of researchers.

Privacy and confidentiality – Relates to the treatment of information that an individual has disclosed in a relationship of trust and with the expectation that it will not be divulged to others without permission in ways that are inconsistent with the understanding of the original disclosure.

Research Principles – Informs the department's research activity and investment and ensure that anticipated benefits of research are achieved and communicated.

- Accessible** – Research outcomes and findings are available and disseminated widely. New knowledge is embedded in policy and replicated on a larger scale.
- Ethical** – Research is highly ethical and appropriate and presents minimal risk and intrusiveness to participants or the department.
- Integrated and aligned** – Research addresses gaps in knowledge, aligns with priorities, and is of clear benefit to participants, schools, the department or broader Queensland population.
- Open and collaborative** – Research is collaborative and involves an open, respectful relationship between all participants, researchers, and partners.
- Quality** – Research is well designed, purposeful and capable of producing sound results that are relevant to the research goals.

Right to Review – Participants have the right to review their contributions or attributable data prior to its publication and can access the findings of the research in an appropriate way.

Standards of Evidence – One of the two foundations of the Evidence Framework, setting out four dimensions in which to consider evidence: design, impact, scalability and investment.

Terms and Conditions for Conducting Research – The department's Terms and Conditions that researchers must agree to, via a signature on their research application, when seeking permission to approach departmental staff, students or facilities for research purposes.

Voluntary participation – The decision as to whether or not to take part in research is completely voluntary (of a person's free will). If a person decides not to take part in the research it will not affect any relationships and/or loss of benefits to which they are otherwise entitled.

Working with children check – Queensland's Blue Card Services provide a screening and ongoing monitoring system for people working with children and young people.

Design: Responsible project development

Objective: To develop an ethically responsible research project with consideration given to individual benefits, rights of individuals and special consideration of students, Indigenous peoples and other minority groups.

- 1.1 Before commencing research, a project must be designed to comply with all of the following points:
 - a. Demonstrate a benefit to research participants, the department, other relevant person/s, and to the broader research literature
 - b. Demonstrate a strong rationale for the administration of the research in education settings (if relevant)
 - c. Comply with the department's [Guidelines for conducting research](#) ("the Guidelines")
 - d. Comply with the [National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research](#) (NSECHR), and the [Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research](#)
 - e. Seek clear informed consent through detailed information sheets and consent forms that are tailored to each participant type as articulated in the [Guidelines](#)
 - f. Ensure participation is voluntary and no participant is subjected to pressure or coercion, including through the inappropriate use of incentives as outlined in the [Guidelines](#)
 - g. Include a well-conceived methodology that addresses the specified research questions
 - h. Incorporate research instruments that are appropriate for use with the participants in terms of language, complexity and length
 - i. Clearly specify procedures for maintaining confidentiality when storing, accessing and disposing of data, consistent with the [Information Privacy Act](#)
 - j. Demonstrate adequate cultural competency.
- 1.2 For external researchers, or research to be published externally, an [application](#) must be submitted to the department for permission to approach departmental sites.
- 1.3 If the researcher is affiliated with a university or research organisation, Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) clearance must be sought and granted.
- 1.4 If the researcher does not have access to a HREC, a detailed ethical statement must be developed that demonstrates alignment with the NSECHR.
- 1.5 If research is to be conducted on school sites or with children, [Blue Card Services' Working with Children](#) check requirements must be met.
- 1.6 If research is to be conducted with Indigenous participants, the research must also comply with the NHMRC [Ethical conduct in research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and communities: Guidelines for researchers and stakeholders](#).

Deliver: Integrity in working with participants

Objective: To implement research projects with the utmost consideration, respect and honesty to all participants and their guardians/carers.

- 2.1 Once implementation of the research activity commences, researchers must ensure they comply with all of the following points:
 - a. The research is conducted or supervised by persons or teams with experience, qualifications and competence that are appropriate for the research
 - b. Consultation with stakeholders is built into research implementation
 - c. Participants and/or their parents have provided informed consent
 - d. There is honest disclosure about the research purpose and intent
 - e. Individual interactions with students occur in settings supervised by departmental staff
 - f. The privacy, confidentiality and cultural sensitivities of the participants and of their communities is respected
 - g. Participants are free to withdraw their participation and can retract all data related to their participation (where practicable) without damage to their relationship with the researchers or the department
 - h. All collected data is confidential and/or de-identified, unless there is a legal requirement to report this data
 - i. Participants have the right to review their contributions or attributable data prior to its publication
 - j. Participants have access to appropriate support if they become anxious or upset during the research
 - k. Research activity is minimally intrusive to departmental sites and should not unduly interfere with their day-to-day functions.
- 2.2 All research activities must comply with relevant departmental and legislative requirements as detailed in the department's [Terms and Conditions for Conducting Research](#). Researchers on departmental sites are expected to behave in accordance with the [Code of Conduct](#) and relevant requirements in [Working on Department of Education \(DoE\) Facilities](#).

Disseminate: Effective communication of findings

Objective: To ensure that the findings of all research activity are communicated to the benefit of participants, the department and practitioners.

- 3.1 On completion of the research project, researchers must ensure they comply with all of the following points:
 - a. They provide all participants with the option of accessing the research findings, presented in a clear and concise manner and in non-technical language
 - b. Findings are reported in a way that is sensitive and respectful of cultural, religious and other differences among research participants, and mindful of the impact that publication could have on participants
 - c. Research findings are communicated using a format, language and concepts that are accessible to the end-users of this research, including, where relevant, practitioners
 - d. Any practical implications of the research that facilitate translation of the research into policy and/or practice are identified
 - e. Honest interpretations of the research are presented that note any limitations and avoid unwarranted generalisations
 - f. Results are communicated and disseminated in ways that permit scrutiny and contribute to public knowledge and understanding
 - g. Future publications are sent to the department for review, prior to their public release
 - h. All participants, schools, other departmental sites and the department are de-identified in publications and presentations unless approved by both the research participants and the department
 - i. They have actively considered how their findings may be of benefit to current departmental policies and/or how their findings can be translated or replicated on a larger scale.
- 3.2 All research communication must comply with relevant departmental and legislative requirements as detailed in the department's [Terms and Conditions for Conducting Research](#), and the [Information Privacy Act](#).