

State Education Research Applications Process (SERAP)

Guidelines 2020

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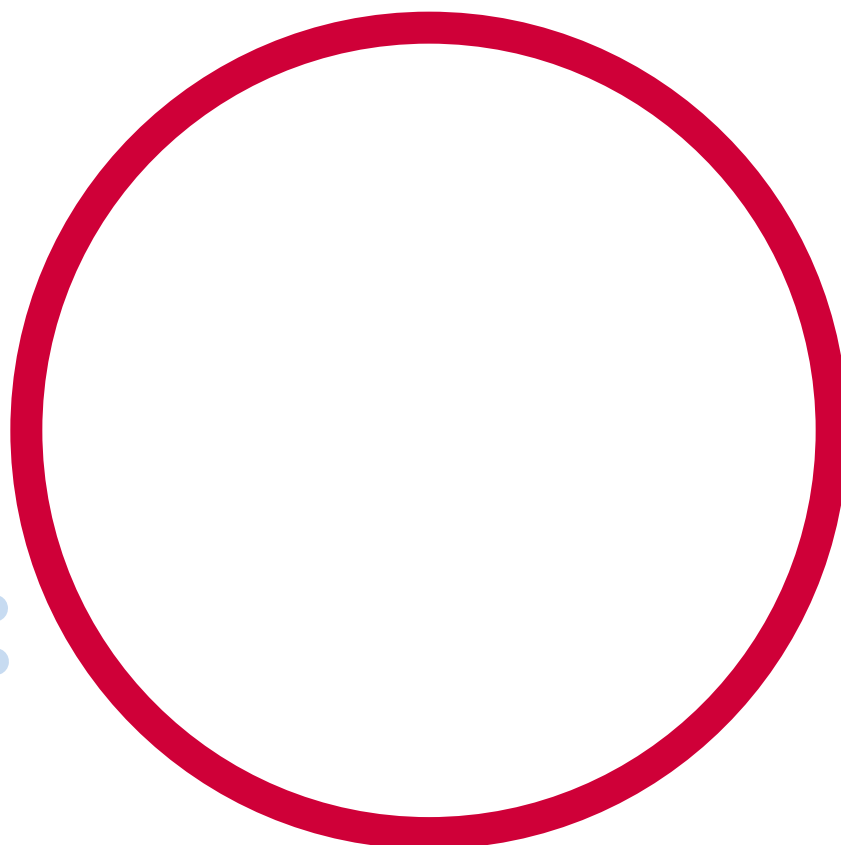
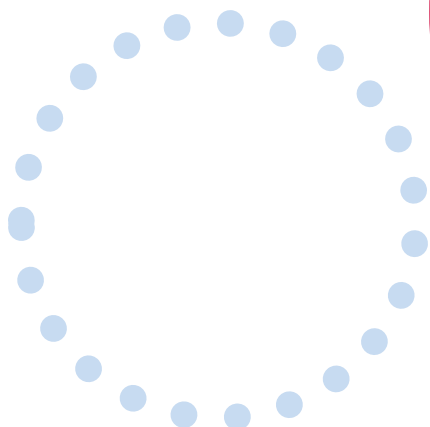
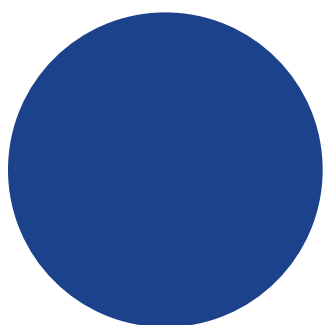


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1. Introduction

The NSW Department of Education (the Department) welcomes research that is of high quality, is consistent with the provisions of the [National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research](#) and supports the [Department's Strategic Plan](#).

The primary audience for these Guidelines is researchers intending to undertake research in NSW government schools, or by analysing previously collected research data held by the department.

The department encourages research that:

- supports learning
- has the potential to contribute to new knowledge and practice in education
- is inter-disciplinary and collaborative
- involves an inquiry into what seems to be working well, so that practitioners and policy makers can learn from the most successful experiences or cases
- employs effective strategies for the dissemination of outcomes to teachers, researchers and other interested parties.

These guidelines apply to research carried out by external agencies in NSW government schools.

Research cannot be conducted in NSW government schools or using previously collected research data without departmental approval.

“Research” is defined as the creation of new knowledge or the use of existing knowledge in new, creative and systematic ways so as to generate new concepts, methodologies and understandings.

A “research design” is a systematic approach to creating new knowledge, concepts, methodologies and understandings.

Contact information

If you have any inquiries in relation to SERAP, please contact us:

Email: serap@det.nsw.edu.au

Telephone 02 7814 0806

Or visit our website at [SERAP Online](#).

2. Projects not considered under SERAP

Requests to undertake the following activities require departmental approval but are NOT considered under SERAP. Approval to undertake these activities should be sought from the areas indicated in Table 1.

Table 1: Approval processes for activities not considered under SERAP

Type of project	Where approval should be sought
Research in TAFE	Contact relevant TAFE Institute
Surveys and opinion polls not part of a research design	Contact the relevant school principal for local surveys or contact the relevant department state office directorate for larger surveys
Access to extant data held by the department for any purposes other than as part of a research design e.g., a request for data by a government agency	Department's Data Services Unit data.services@det.nsw.edu.au
Information collection for HSC, university undergraduate and postgraduate assignments, e.g., a 1-unit assignment. Note: Theses and honours projects (and equivalent 4th year university projects) are not exempt and must be considered under SERAP	Contact the relevant school principal(s)
The trial or evaluation of education resources or programs that are not part of a research design	Contact the relevant school principal(s) for smaller trials or contact the relevant department state office directorate for larger trials

3. Criteria for assessment under SERAP

When assessing research applications, the department gives consideration to:

- benefit – the potential benefit of the research to the department, the researchers and the wider community
- feasibility and methodology – the likelihood that these benefits will be realised
- cost – the impact on, or time and effort required by department staff and students as participants and co-investigators
- ethics – whether the participants are accorded the respect and protection that is due to them
- Likely benefits, feasibility and methodology are considered in relation to likely costs and ethical requirements.

Benefit

The department will consider the extent to which the research has potential benefit to:

- the department and Government, in terms of supporting the achievement of existing priorities or informing new priorities and policies
- the researchers, in terms of their own professional learning
- students, teachers, schools and communities, education systems and the wider public
- the field of education or human services – to theory, knowledge, and practice.

In assessing the potential benefit of a research proposal, the department gives greater weight to a proposal that demonstrates educational benefit.

Feasibility and methodology

The department will consider the extent to which the research has the potential to realise the stated benefits, for example:

- the design of the project demonstrates care and systematic attention to detail in planning and methodology and is capable of producing sound results

- the research goals, questions, strategy, methodology, research instruments, data analysis approaches and the broader purposes to which the research contributes are well-matched and the links between all the elements are made explicit
- the practical and resource requirements of the research, particularly in the context of schooling practices and protocols, have been well planned
- consultation with stakeholders is built into the research
- dissemination strategies for the findings of the research are clearly articulated
- the legality and feasibility of providing data, particularly in the context of proposals to use personal data, or to link data.

Cost

The department will consider the extent of the potential costs of the research in terms of:

- the likely impact and demands of the research on departmental and school operations
- the time, resources and commitment required by staff and students in schools
- the extent to which the research supports activities in school or are additional to them
- the potential risks to the department of the research
- the extent of participation, funding or support from other government and non-government bodies.

Ethics

The department will consider the degree to which participants are accorded the respect and protection that is due to them. That is:

- the research conforms to the principles in the [National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research](#) issued by the National Health and Medical Research Council
- the research design incorporates mechanisms to deal adequately with any harm or discomfort that may occur as a result of participation in the research
- the informed consent of participants and the assent of children is obtained before research begins
- a person's decision to participate in research is voluntary and based on sufficient information and adequate understanding of both the proposed research and the implications of participation (this may require the use of translated information and consent forms and of interpreters)
- the research design does not involve the use of deception
- no one is subject to pressure in deciding whether to participate

- people who elect not to participate in a research project are not required to give any reason for their decision
- participants are entitled to withdraw from the research at any stage and where practicable, any data they have contributed will be withdrawn
- the project does not involve any inducement that is likely to encourage participants to participate
- consent is renegotiated or confirmed from time to time where projects are complex or long- running, or participants are vulnerable
- researchers respect the developing capacity of children and young people to be involved in decisions about participation in research
- active consent, where the primary carer has explicitly agreed to participate through the return of a completed consent form, is to be obtained in all but exceptional circumstances
- the privacy and anonymity of participants is protected
- researchers respect the privacy, confidentiality and cultural sensitivities of the participants and of their communities and comply with NSW privacy law
- procedures for maintaining confidentiality when storing, accessing and disposing of data are clearly specified and comply with NSW privacy law
- proposals ensure the confidentiality of participating schools
- the research is undertaken primarily for the public good rather than for commercial or material gain

4. Risk, consent and privacy

a. Level of risk

In some cases, research may lead to harm, discomfort or inconvenience for participants or others.

Harm includes:

- physical harm, including injury, illness and pain
- psychological harm, including distress
- social harm, including social stigmatisation
- economic harm, including the imposition of direct or indirect costs on participants
- legal harm, including disclosure of criminal conduct.

Less serious than harm is discomfort, such as anxiety induced by an interview. Less serious again is inconvenience, such as giving up time to participate in research.

A risk is a potential for harm, discomfort or inconvenience. Determining the level of risk involves considering:

- the likelihood that harm, discomfort or inconvenience will occur
- the severity of the harm
- the consequences of the harm.

The expression 'low risk research' describes research in which the only foreseeable consequence is one of discomfort. 'Negligible risk research' describes research in which there is no foreseeable consequence of harm or discomfort or that any foreseeable consequence is no more than inconvenience.

Much human research and most educational research, carries low or negligible risk. In designing research projects, researchers should gauge the level of risk and have strategies in place to minimise this risk. Information about such strategies needs to be outlined in information sheets for participants.

All researchers have a responsibility to design their research and report the findings in ways that are sensitive to and respectful of:

- cultural, religious and other such differences amongst research participants
- the impact that publication could have on participants.

Insurance cover

The department expects that research activity will not expose students, staff or the department to any unreasonable risk. Accordingly, the department requires researchers to hold public liability and workers compensation insurance for the term of the research project.

Usually, the researcher will be covered either by the institution in which they are enrolled or by their employer. Specifically, the researcher must have, or be covered by:

- public liability insurance in the amount of not less than \$10 million for each and every occurrence and unlimited in the aggregate for the period of the project
- professional indemnity insurance in the amount of not less than \$10 million for any one occurrence
- workers' compensation insurance in accordance with NSW legislation for all research staff.

The department requires researchers who are not employed by a government department or a university, or who are not students at a university, to provide evidence of their, or their organisation's insurance coverage for the research activities. Such evidence will ordinarily take the form of a copy of the certificate of currency and should state:

- the insurer
- details of the cover
- the value of the insurance
- the parties insured and
- the term of the insurance.

Duty of care

The department must be satisfied that research involving the participation of students is not contrary to their best interests.

Researchers must be conversant with and comply with the [Department's Child Protection Policy and procedures](#).

The department does not encourage the interaction of researchers with individual students. Where research requires interviews with students, a group interview should be conducted in the presence of a teacher or other trusted adult. If a group interview is not possible, the interview should be conducted in the presence of a teacher or other trusted adult or in an open space in view of the school staff.

Research involving students must provide for their emotional and psychological security and wellbeing. If at any time during a research project, a researcher identifies that a student may be at risk of harm, the researcher must report this information, including the identity of the student, to the principal.

b. Privacy and anonymity

Research involving the disclosure of personal or health information held by the department must comply with the requirements of the [Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998](#), the [Health Records and Information Privacy Act 2002](#) and any relevant statutory guidelines or codes of practice issued under this legislation.

It is important that the privacy and anonymity of participants be protected. So, for example, if the research involves a questionnaire, the information should be collected anonymously. No individual should not be able to be identified from the information. (If the questionnaire collects student age, class, sex, language spoken other than English, it might be possible to identify an individual).

When anonymous data collection cannot be achieved, such as when information is being gathered by audiotape or videotape or identifying information is needed to track participants in longitudinal studies, the confidentiality of participants must be assured.

An Act or law may override privacy legislation requiring confidentiality of personal or health information. If a child reveals to a researcher they are at risk of abuse or neglect, or that they have experienced abuse or neglect recently or that they may harm themselves or someone else, researchers are required to make a report to the school principal.

Persons other than the researcher must not be able to link the information collected to individual participants. Researchers need to ensure that in reporting the findings of research, that small cell sizes (usually 5 or less) containing information that could potentially identify individuals are suppressed.

The NSW Privacy laws control how public sector agencies handle personal and health information. The principles applied under these laws cover collection, use, security, access, amendment and disclosure. In some cases, the NSW government approves exemptions for research projects.

Section 27B of the Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act exempts public sector agencies from complying with the collection, use and disclosure principles applying to personal information if a number of conditions apply. A similar exemption applies to the use and disclosure of health information at Clauses 10(1)(f) and 11(1)(f) of Schedule 1 of the Health Records and Information Privacy Act.

The [Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998](#) and [Health Records and Information Privacy Act 2002](#) provide for Statutory Guidelines on Research (Guidelines). These apply to NSW public sector agencies such as a public university. The Guidelines prescribe the manner in which the research exemption under these Acts must be applied.

A public sector research agency making use of the research exemption must show:

1. the public interest in the research
2. the reasons why it cannot either comply with one or more of the Information Protection Principles or take the preferred steps of de-identification or obtaining consent
3. what steps, if any, it will take to ensure that privacy risk to individuals is minimised.

c. Consent

Active consent

In all but exceptional circumstances, the department requires that active consent be granted for all participants. There are five key elements of consent:

- the individual gives consent voluntarily
- the individual is adequately informed before giving consent
- the consent is specific

- the consent is current
- the individual has the capacity to understand and communicate their consent.

Consent is voluntary if given without coercion or threat, and with sufficient time to understand the request and take advice and where participants are free at some time later to change their mind and revoke their consent.

Consent is informed if the participant has reasonable knowledge of all the relevant facts including the implications of providing or withholding consent.

Consent is specific if the items for which consent is sought are discrete rather than bundled, so that the participant is able to consent to some but not others. Consent is current if consent to participate in the research is obtained close to and before the research takes place. Researchers should make it clear to the participant that they are entitled to change their mind and revoke their consent later on, without penalty.

<https://www.ipc.nsw.gov.au/fact-sheet-consent-and-bundled-consent>

It is generally expected that where research involves the participation of students who are children or young people, consent will be provided by the student's parent/carer in place of, or in addition to, the assent of the student.

In the case of participants or their parents/carers with limited English language skills, translated information and consent forms should be provided. Where participants or their parents/carers are not literate in their first language, interpreters should be provided to ensure informed consent.

Opt out consent

The use of opt out consent occurs when consent is assumed unless some action is taken to withdraw consent.

Opt out consent runs the risk of participants, or their parents/carers denying that they provided informed consent and alleging breaches of privacy legislation.

The Research Guidelines NSW privacy legislation makes provision for the disclosure of personal and health information for the purpose of research, in particular circumstances where disclosure would otherwise be in breach of the legislation.

Research requiring opt out consent must be approved by an ethics review body which has considered the implications of the absence of active consent.

In deciding whether to apply opt out consent, the department takes into consideration that:

- the opt out option is clearly and prominently presented
- it is likely that the individual would receive and read the information about the proposed collection of data, use or disclosure, and the option to opt out

- the individual is given information on the implications of not opting out
- the opt out option is freely available and not bundled with other purposes
- it is easy for the individual to exercise the option to opt out, for example, there is little or no financial cost or effort required by the individual
- the consequences of failing to opt out are not serious
- an individual who opts out at a later time is, as far as practicable, placed in the position as if they had opted out earlier.

<https://www.ipc.nsw.gov.au/fact-sheet-consent-and-bundled-consent>

Standing parental consent

Standing parental consent enables parents/carers to give consent for their child's involvement in particular types of research, in the school setting, for the period of the school year.

Parents/carers are notified of each project but are not required to give further consent in each instance. They are reminded with each notification that they may withdraw their consent for the particular project. Parents/carers may withdraw their standing consent at any time.

Schools may only arrange for standing parental consent to be given for a child's participation in research that is for the benefit of children and comprises no more than:

- overt observation in school classrooms
- anonymous or coded questionnaires that are potentially identifiable
- surveys on subject matter not involving sensitive personal information or personal or family relationships.

In the case of standing parental/carer consent, researchers should consider the information relating to opt out consent.

5. Special considerations in relation to data requests

Extant data is not typically collected for the purposes of research. Extant data refers to data that has already been collected and is held by the department. This includes school attendance data and performance data, such as NAPLAN and HSC results.

The department holds publicly available data at the [NSW Education Data Hub](#).

If the department considers that the cost of preparing the information to meet a request for extant data is substantial, the department will provide an estimate of the cost to the applicant and reserves the right to recover these costs from the applicant should they decide to proceed with the request.

Where data is individually identifiable, the consent of participants must be sought to use their data for the purposes of research. Aggregate data is released on the basis that:

- no information that permits the reporting of individual students is released
- data released is valid and relevant
- it is of acceptable quality.

6. Special considerations for educational research with and about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

Researchers conducting educational research with, and about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are to ensure that the research follows a process of meaningful engagement and reciprocity between the researcher and the individuals and/or communities involved in the research. To this end, researchers should ensure that their research follows the Guidelines for Ethical Research in Australian Indigenous Studies created by The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS). These Guidelines can be accessed at the following link.

<https://aiatsis.gov.au/research/ethical-research>

7. Special advice to honours, masters and diploma students

New researchers, such as candidates for Bachelors (Honours) degree, Masters degree or diplomas, are likely to find that their research experience, resources and available time make the choice of some research topics unsuitable. These subject areas include:

- eating disorders
- drug or alcohol consumption
- sexuality
- grief, death or trauma
- depression
- anti-social behaviour or criminal activity
- sensitive personal and emotional issues
- cultural issues.

This is also the case for research designs which include any non-standard features such as:

- passive, rather than active consent
- use of procedures, activities or equipment other than those in everyday school use, particularly those that may involve physical risk or emotional distress
- medical procedures and/or the collection of body fluids for analysis
- collection of personal background information
- possible identification of individual participants, classes or schools in the report
- reporting of comparative data which could identify individual schools or educational sectors.

The principal beneficiary of Bachelors (Honours) degree, Masters degree or diplomas is in general, the researcher themselves, in terms of their own professional learning. Given this and their limited timeframes for completion, these projects should be small scale and low cost in terms of the time and effort required by staff and students in schools.

In view of the small scale of these projects, they will be given an expedited review by the Research Team.

8. The application process

Overview

Principal researchers apply through SERAP online: [SERAP online](#). A user guide for SERAP online is available at [SERAP User Guide](#).

SERAP online:

- is a content management, communication and tracking system for research applications
- collects administrative information required to produce, submit and assess a research application
- collects information required to create a researcher profile
- allows applicants to create, manage access to, view progress and update SERAP applications that are linked to their profile
- collects any screening information required for verification by the department
- enables researchers to place their research reports in a public-facing repository.

How to apply

The principal researcher should register for a researcher account on the researcher login page in SERAP online, by entering their email address and creating and confirming a password. The researcher will receive an email with instructions to activate the researcher account and complete the researcher profile.

After logging in, the researcher should click on the option to create a SERAP. A SERAP number will be assigned, and the researcher will be asked to create and confirm a password unique to that SERAP. Researchers can apply for multiple SERAPs with a single researcher account.

Passwords and access levels

There are two types of passwords on SERAP online: researcher account passwords and SERAP application passwords. It is recommended that different passwords be used for each.

The researcher account password should not be shared. It allows access to researcher profile information and to all SERAP applications linked to that account. This password can be reset through the [researcher login page](#) of SERAP online.

The SERAP number and password can be shared with team members to assist in the management of the application process. It allows access to the specific SERAP application only, keeping the researcher profile and other SERAP applications private. The SERAP application password can be reset on the overview screen of the SERAP application, after logging on to SERAP online.

Technical requirements

There are some basic technical requirements for using SERAP online:

- computer or other device that is connected to the internet while the application is being completed
- any of the following browsers:
 - Internet Explorer (version 9 or higher)
 - Firefox (latest version)
 - Chrome (latest version)
 - Safari (Mac; latest version).

9. Information and documentation required

The following information and documents are required when submitting an application on SERAP online.

Details of proposed research

Required information about the research proposal includes:

- schools that will be invited to participate in the research (if known)
- potential benefits of the research
- alignment to national and departmental priorities and contribution to existing research
- research goals and questions
- research methodology and awareness of any limitations
- dissemination plan
- research milestones and funding details
- costs in terms of time and effort for administrative support staff and participants.

Research instruments

Interview schedules, questionnaires or other data collection instruments (including tests or stimulus materials and interest and focus group questions) must be uploaded as part of the application. These are to be in the final form proposed for use. Information that demonstrates the adequacy and appropriateness of the instrument(s) (such as data relating to its validity and reliability) should be provided where available.

Letter to principals

A letter to principals seeking permission for their schools' participation in the research should be written in plain English. It should be concise and clearly worded. It must include information outlining the nature of the research, what is required of school resources, school personnel and participants, the amount of time research activities will take and the timeline for the research.

Information to principals should include as attachments, research instruments, information sheets and consent forms, as well as any other documents to be provided to participants.

The letter must also inform principals of their right to withdraw from part or all of the project at any time.

Information sheets and consent forms for participants

Information about the project and the request for consent to participate must be provided in a suitable format to all participants. This may require some items being translated. Samples of information sheets and consent forms are provided in Appendix 2.

Working with Children Check

All researchers having face-to-face contact with/observation of children as part of a research project in NSW government schools **must** obtain a NSW Working with Children Check number. Further information can be found at [Working With Children Check](#) with the office of the Children's Guardian.

The following information must be provided in SERAP online applications for all such researchers:

- full name as on valid photo identification used
- date of birth
- Working With Children Check number
- expiry date of Working With Children Check number.

The department's Working with Children Check Policy is at

<https://education.nsw.gov.au/policy-library/policies/working-with-children-check-policy?refid=285776>.

Ethics committee approval

A copy of the final approval letter from the relevant research ethics committee is required where applicable.

Applications to a university ethics committee (or similar) can be submitted at the same time as the SERAP application. However, while the department will start its consideration of the proposal at the same time as the ethics committee is making its own assessment, no application will be approved until a copy of the final ethics committee approval letter, all ethics committee communications regarding the project and final approved versions of information sheets and consent forms have been received.

University ethics committee approval letters and related documents can be uploaded to SERAPonline during the submission or processing stages of the application.

Declaration and indemnification

Prior to submitting the SERAP application, a research application agreement must be downloaded, signed by the principal researcher and the employer/university research office and the signed copy scanned and uploaded. The agreement serves as a confidential declaration and indemnification.

10. After submitting the application

Assessment and processing

Following submission, the application will be assessed by departmental officers. As part of this process the SERAP team:

- identifies the expertise or knowledge required to assess each application
- ensures that each application is assessed by at least one departmental officer with expertise specific to the research topic.

Once a SERAP application has been submitted online, it cannot be changed. Additional documentation can be uploaded, additional schools can be added and researchers Working With Children Check details can be added and deleted as necessary.

During the course of assessment, researchers may be informed of any concerns expressed by assessor/s and asked to provide further information or address issues raised. The proposal may require modification before approval can be finalised. These communications will be made via SERAP online.

During this stage you may log on to check the progress of your application and provide ethics documentation, as required.

At the conclusion of the assessment process, the research application will either be approved or rejected, and a formal letter of notification will be sent via email. In general, the assessment process is completed within four to six weeks from the time of submission of the application.

Approval

SERAP approval entitles researchers to approach NSW government schools to be involved in the research. Such approval will be granted for a twelve-month period. However, approval will not extend beyond the duration of the ethics committee's approval or the stated completion date of the project, whichever is sooner.

If the research proposal is approved, an approval letter will be sent via email which contains the names of all researchers cleared for interaction with/observation of children in NSW government schools, for the purposes of the proposed research.

A copy of the approval letter must be provided to the principal of any NSW government school approached to be part of the research. Principals have the right, in all cases, to decline requests for the conduct of research in their schools; SERAP approval does not diminish this right.

Rejection

Research proposals that do not meet the assessment criteria, and cannot be modified to do so, will be rejected. The department maintains a further right to reject research applications at its discretion in accordance with current priorities and circumstance.

Changes to researchers

The applicant is responsible for updating Working With Children Check information for researchers interacting with children as part of their research. This can be done by logging into SERAP online and navigating to the relevant SERAP and deleting/adding researchers as required. The SERAP team must be advised of any changes in researchers before an updated approval letter will be issued.

Extensions

Researchers can apply to extend the period of approval for research projects via SERAP online in the 'Actions' tab of the relevant SERAP application. Please upload a copy of the current university ethics committee approval letter (where applicable) which covers the period of the extension requested. Such approval will be granted for a twelve-month period. Approval will not extend beyond the duration of the ethics committee's approval or the stated completion date of the project, whichever is sooner.

Variations

Further approval **must** be sought for all significant variations to approved research projects. As a general rule, if a researcher has submitted a modification to their university ethics approval, they should also apply for a variation to SERAP. Researchers may contact the SERAP team to discuss the situation.

Researchers can apply for a variation in the 'Actions' tab of the relevant SERAP application. Researchers should describe the changes they are planning to make and provide associated supporting documentation such as revised or new research instruments, information for participants and consent letters. Researchers should also upload a copy of the revised university ethics committee approval letter (where applicable) which covers the period of the variation request. A list of additional schools to be approached (if any) should also be provided.

11. Provision of reports to the department

Submitting drafts of publications

Researchers are required to submit drafts of proposed publications based in research approved under SERAP, at least four weeks prior to submission to the publisher to enable subject matter experts to comment on the draft.

Submission of reports

A condition of approval is that researchers will provide the department with a report of the research and a concise executive summary of the report, on completion of the project. The latter is to be provided in a form suitable for wider dissemination. The report may take the form of a journal article or articles, or a copy of a thesis.

Researchers are also expected to provide the executive summary to participating schools.

The executive summary should focus on the outcomes of the research and should include the following sections:

- the title of the research
- the name of the principal researcher and their organisation or institution
- a précis of the research
- the importance of the research – how it builds on and adds to current theory and knowledge and how it is of value to public education
- research questions, hypotheses or relationships that have been examined
- a brief outline of the research design, including a rationale for that design, a description of the sample and data collection methods
- findings in relation to the research questions.

Reports and summaries should be written in a clear and concise manner, use headings and minimal use of technical terms. If technical terms or acronyms are used they should be explained.

Sending reports

Email an electronic copy of the report to serap@det.nsw.edu.au. Submission of papers that have been written based on the approved project are also welcome. Reports can also be uploaded to the public facing [Research Repository](#) in SERAP online.

Appendix 1

Criteria for quality research

Quality research is well designed and capable of producing sound results that are relevant to the research goals. This requires that the project demonstrates care and systematic attention to detail in planning and is described in sufficient detail to make the project transparent to peers.

Quality research has merit. It is:

- justifiable by its potential benefit, which may include its contribution to knowledge and understanding, to improved social welfare and individual wellbeing and to the development of skill and expertise of researchers
- based on a thorough study of the current literature and previous studies so that:
 - the research can be supported by a systematic review of the literature that would demonstrate the importance of the research question
 - the research builds upon the results of previous research
 - similar research that has not already been carried out in the same, or similar contexts
- designed using methods appropriate for achieving the aims of the proposal
- designed to ensure that respect for the participants is not compromised by the aims of the research, by the way it is carried out, or by the results
- conducted or supervised by persons or teams with experience, qualifications and competence that are appropriate for the research
- conducted using facilities and resources appropriate for the research.

Researchers should ensure that research goals, questions, strategy, methodology, research instruments and the broader purposes to which the research contributes are clearly described and well matched so that:

- research goals and research questions are feasible, focused and clearly stated
- the research strategy adopted is appropriate to answering the research questions
- research instruments are well designed to elicit responses that will answer the research questions and do not include the examination of any unnecessary or extraneous elements
- the instruments are appropriate for use with the participants in terms of language, complexity and length.

The links between all these elements should also be made explicit.

Quality research is conducted with integrity and is carried out by researchers committed to searching for knowledge and understanding, who follow recognised principles of ethical research conduct. Conducting research honestly includes, for example:

- taking steps to minimise the possibility of unrecognised or selective influences on the data collection and analysis
- the methods for analysing the data are clearly stated, systematic and appropriate to the nature of the data
- designing research that considers and accounts for all important influences on the issues or variables being investigated
- identifying the limitations of the research and avoiding unwarranted generalisation
- where interviews and questionnaires are proposed, taking care to ensure that leading questions are avoided
- clearly specifying how the participants will be recruited and justifying the number and kind of participants proposed
- disseminating and communicating results whether favourable or unfavourable, in ways that permit scrutiny and contribute to public knowledge and understanding.

Research applications should provide explicit statements that demonstrate these qualities.

Appendix 2

Sample information sheets and consent forms

Research on <name of project>

Information sheet for parents and carers

About the research project

The <name of your organisation> is inviting your child to participate in a research project about

<focus of research>.

We want to find out <purpose of research>. This information will be used to <what information will be used for>.

We are asking you and your child if you consent for your child to take part in this project.

What will be involved?

We will visit your child's school <or wherever project will take place> during <specify when>.

At this time your child will <specify what the child will take part in, focus group, survey, interview etc>. It will last no longer than <specify amount of time>.

What if I don't want my child to take part in the consultations/project?

That's OK, it is not compulsory.

Both you and your child have to agree to your child taking part. To let your child's school know that you are happy for your child to participate, please fill out the form attached and return it to your child's school, or to us.

If you and your child decide to take part, you both have the right to withdraw from the project at any time, without having to provide a reason.

Can I or my child be identified as participants?

Include information here about how identifying the research project will be. For example: No, you or your child will not be identified through the research project. No report produced from the research will identify your child.

You may also want to say, if relevant:

With your consent and your child's consent, we may use quotes and photographs in the final report, on our website or in other materials, but no names or identifying information will be used. If you don't want photos used, you can say so on the consent form.

We will keep your child's name so we can send your child a certificate of appreciation <or whatever you will send them> but we will not use it for any other purpose.

Is there anything that might make my child upset if they take part?

For example:

The topic is not likely to be upsetting or uncomfortable for your child. However, if anything they talk about during the discussion does make them feel upset they can stop taking part. If your child wants, we can assist them to obtain help by contacting you, teachers or counsellors in the school, or by giving them the names of other people to talk to such as Kids Helpline.

What will happen to the information collected?

Explain what will happen with the information. For example:

The material will be kept in a locked storage cabinet at <name of organisation> for five years from the completion of the project. At the end of five years the material will be securely destroyed.

What do I need to do?

If you agree for your child to take part in the project, please complete the consent form attached to this letter and return it to <return arrangement/school/etc> by <date>. Your child has also been given an information sheet about the research project.

If you have any questions about the project you can contact <person's name and position> at

<name of organisation> on <phone number/email address>.

Consent form for parents or carers

Research on <name of project>

Please complete this form and return to <name of school, centre, organisation, etc> by <date>.

I, _____

(please print name of parent/carer)

declare that I have responsibility for

(please print name of child)

and I give consent to their participation in <name of project> to be held on <date>.

In giving my consent, I:

(NOTE: Not all of these dot points may be relevant to your project)

- have read the information about the project and understand what is involved
- have discussed participation in the project with my child and they are willing to take part
- am happy for my child to participate in <project name>
- understand that <name of organisation> is conducting the <consultation/focus group etc> and that <teacher> may also participate
- understand that the consultation will be audio/video recorded and that quotes may be used in the report, on the <name of organisation's> website or other materials, but that my child's name or any identifying information will not be used.

Please tick 'Yes' if you agree and 'No' if you do not agree:

I agree to my child's voice being recorded and quotes being used Yes No

I understand that my child's photo may be taken and used in the Report Yes No

on the <name of organisation's> website or other materials, but that mychild's name or any identifying information will not be used

Details of Parent/Carer

Name _____

Signature _____

Date _____

Phone _____

Appendix 3

Research Priorities

These research priorities are designed for the consideration of researchers applying to conduct research in NSW government schools under the State Education Research Applications Process (SERAP). They may be helpful in informing researchers' choice of topics.

The department values research that investigates ways of:

- identifying and piloting effective transition strategies at a systemic and local level for students moving between home, early childhood education and care, school education, post-school education and training, and employment
 - cultivating students' and education staff's wellbeing and happiness
 - evaluating and enhancing the effectiveness of current and potential pedagogical approaches
 - meeting the education and training needs of culturally and linguistically diverse communities and disadvantaged groups
 - designing and implementing learning infrastructure which engages students, enhances their experience and improves outcomes
 - improving quality teaching by enhancing the effectiveness of teacher professional learning, particularly using digital technologies
- identifying current and future skills needs for the NSW industries and workforce and how these needs should be addressed.