Guide for Completing
Application to Conduct Research

The Department of Education (the department) Research Approval Process (RAP) aims to ensure that research conducted in NT Government schools, with the department staff or using the department corporate owned data is of educational benefit, does not disrupt students learning or infringe upon the rights or jeopardise the welfare of its students or staff and is capable of producing good quality results. The Research and Evaluation Team (RET) monitors the amount and type of research activity being conducted in schools to ensure that the research is not only appropriate but does not overly burden specific schools or the department.

This Guide for Completing Application to Conduct Research (the Guide) is to be read at the same time as completing the Application to Conduct Research Form. The Guide is intended for both internal and external research applicants, including research staff, research students, independent consultants and others (noting that some sections of the application may not apply to departmental employees).

To ensure your Application is processed in a timely manner, you should make sure that you provide:
- Sufficient information in the research application form to enable the department to process the Application adequately (including filling the annexure related to data requests if applicable); and
- All supplementary documentation, including a copy of your research ethics application, the official letter confirming that you obtained ethical clearance, all research instruments, any support letters, samples of information statements and consent forms pertaining to any of the following participant types: teachers, principals, parents/carers, students, community stakeholders, etc.

Specifically, the department reviews the Application to assess the following:
- Benefit/value of the research to the department, schools and participants and to the education sector in general;
- Burden and impact on schools and participants, as well as risks to the department;
- Appropriateness of methodology to the research question and in the school setting; and
- Ethical design and intended conduct of the research, including proposed consent procedures and approaches to deal with confidentiality, privacy and potential harm.

You should allow a minimum of 6 weeks for your Application to be processed before commencing your project (more if the department data is required). Email your Application and attachments to: Researchapps.det@nt.gov.au.

NOTE:
1. Researchers must wait until authorisation through a letter of approval from the Research Advisory Committee has been obtained before seeking to undertake research in Northern Territory Government (NTG) schools. However, researchers may contact the principal of relevant schools prior to submitting this application to gauge their interest in participating in the research project. A letter of support from a relevant school principal can be included as part of this application but should not be treated as approval to commence research in schools.
2. Applications specifically for market research or possible commercial advantage will not be supported by the the department.

3. It is important to note that it is not the role of the department to improve the quality of a research proposal and develop it on behalf of the researcher(s); it is the role of the researcher(s) to work with their organisation or, in the case of a student, their supervisor.

SECTION A – PROJECT TITLE AND CATEGORY
Title of Research Project
Provide the full title of the research project and a short (abbreviated) title that may be more commonly used.

Category of Research
Indicate the relevant category by checking the box. To check a tick box, right click in the box, select Properties, and check the default value.

SECTION B – APPLICANT INFORMATION
Provide contact information for the main researcher and the roles and responsibilities of others involved in undertaking this research project.

Details of funding
Include the name of the funding organisation, the amount of funding, including the type of in-kind support for the research proposal.

Insurance Cover
It is the responsibility of the research applicant to ensure their research institution has appropriate and sufficient insurance to indemnify researchers and the department for loss or damage suffered for reasons of negligence or breach of the researcher, contractors, subcontractors or agents for an adequate period.

Your contact person/s within the department or Schools if applicable
This information will assist the RET to identify the appropriate stakeholders and contact persons within the the department. If the research proposal was generated within the department, indicate the main person responsible for the project. If you have approached a School Principal during the planning phase, include their name and school.

List names of other organisations involved in the research (if applicable)
Provide details of other organisations that may be involved in the research, as collaborators or consultants.

Conflict of Interest
The researchers should detail any potential conflicts of interest, either real or perceived.

Details of previous research in the NT
Provide the title of research project/s previously conducted in the Northern Territory.

SECTION C – BENEFITS OF PROPOSAL
Alignment to NT and/or national strategic priorities, policies and initiatives
The department supports the development of research proposals that are aligned to either or both Northern Territory and national priorities. The department's current Strategic Plan can be found on the department's website.

Anticipated benefits of proposed study

The applicant should describe how the project will benefit the department, schools, education, the community and/or participants. The research project should have the potential to increase knowledge and extend rather than duplicate existing knowledge.

SECTION D – PROPOSAL DETAILS

Project Aim and Objectives

Provide the project aim, which should be a broad statement of desired outcomes, or the general purpose of the research. You should emphasise what is to be accomplished, not how it is to be accomplished and address the long-term project outcomes. They should reflect the aspirations and expectations that justified the research topic /project.

Detail the objectives of your research proposal. These are the steps you are going to take to answer your research questions, including how the aims are to be accomplished. These should be highly focused and feasible, and address the more immediate project outcomes.

Identify the research problem

Describe the problem systematically and provide information on its importance, and its priority for education/schools/students/the community or other.

Research hypothesis (if applicable)

Include a hypothesis if applicable to your research. The hypothesis should be a tentative prediction or an explanation of the relationship between two or more variables. All variables relevant to the study should be identified.

Overview of Research Methodology

Provide an overall description of the research methods to be used: explain how the design matches the needs of the research problem/hypothesis and indicate how the empirical research component will be conducted and/or how the participants will be recruited. Include the research design, the population to be studied, and the research instruments, or tools, to be used in the research methodology.

Research Instruments

A final copy/sample of all research tools or instruments should be submitted with your Research Application (usually as attachments).

Sample selection

Provide the name of each NT Government school to be invited to participate in the research, including reason for selection and details of sampling procedure. Researchers are required to notify the department in writing prior to changes in the involvement of schools in your research.

Project timeline

Insert required information into the table provided.

Participants

The National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (NHMRC 2007) states that 'in educational research, discussion with the school community should be built into the research design' (sec. 4.2.3). Applicants must clearly describe in the letter to the School Principal the time and resources they expect the participants to commit.

Does the project require participation of <u>students</u> in NT Government schools?

The School Principal is the person best placed to judge the likely degree of disruption to the school program. The researcher must consider ways of ensuring that data collection procedures cause minimal disruption to school activities. It is expected that researchers will discuss these matters with principals and teachers to ensure that timeframes are appropriate given the school context.

In addition, the department requires positive informed consent. Failure to return a form, which the parent may not have received, does not provide 'consent'. The principles of informed consent must be upheld by researchers as an integral part of planning the data collection process. Any exceptions must be explicitly justified. Within this context, it is expected that in the majority of cases, written consent should be obtained from parents/carers of students under the age of 18 and from students 18 years and over (exceptions can be supported that take the topic, modalities and context of research into consideration). To ensure that consent is informed, researchers should prepare a plain language information sheet for distribution to parents/carers and this should be submitted with the Application.

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

- Parents/carers/students should be given enough information to make an informed decision about whether or not to participate in the proposed research;
- Participants are made aware of the voluntary nature of the participation in the study;
- Participants are made aware that they retain the right to withdraw from participation in the study at any time;
- Active consent is required from parents, carers and participants before research can be undertaken;
- That their participation, or not, will not affect their relationships with the schools and education system; and
- The process of informing and gaining consent from teachers/principals must also be conducted similar to the above.

Provide details of student involvement by inserting information into the table provided.

1. It is mandatory for people who have contact or potential contact with children in certain specified areas of employment to hold a Working with Children Clearance Notice. Please ensure that you satisfy this requirement as per http://www.workingwithchildren.nt.gov.au/.
2. It is every person's responsibility in the NT to report child abuse and neglect and cases where a child has been or is likely to be the victim of a sexual offence. Further information is available at http://childrenandfamilies.nt.gov.au/Child_Protection/Child_Abuse/index.aspx.
3. For research in schools, please note that in the Northern Territory the stages of schooling include: Pre-school, Primary Years (Years T-6), Middle Years (Years 7-9) and Senior Years (Years 10-12).

Does the project require participation of <u>staff</u> in NT Government schools?

Provide details of school staff involvement by inserting information into the table provided.

Does the project require the participation of corporate or other departmental staff?

Provide details of departmental staff involvement by inserting information into the table provided.

Do you require access to the department's data, including data within its schools?

The department collects data both centrally and within schools to monitor performance across schools with the aim to improve services and outcomes in student learning. Some of this data is useful for research and can be made available (under certain conditions) when requested by researchers. Whether this data is held centrally, by schools or by their staff, researchers wishing to access any such data must obtain the department's approval and complete the Information Access Application (Annexure 2 in the Application form).

Once approval to undertake research has been obtained through the current process, researchers must apply for data access in the way specified in the Letter of Approval. This will require the researcher to negotiate data supply and use conditions with the department's Performance and Data Management (PaDM) Branch. This later phase might add a significant time lag to any project, and should be factored into the implementation of any research project involving the department's data. The resulting timeframe will depend on the nature, scope, precision and timing of the request, the extra burden placed on those business areas dealing with competing demands, and the resources research organisations are willing to invest in speeding up the process.

Irrespective of the anticipated source of the data within the department (including schools themselves), the release of data must be declared in Annexure 2, and further negotiated with the department's PaDM Branch subsequent to the approval to conduct research.

Procedures to ensure the integrity and confidentiality of data during processing and storage must be established. All identifiable information must be deleted and data management procedures employed to ensure anonymity of participants, schools and the department.

SECTION E – ETHICS

Have you received or sought approval from an Ethics Committee for this research?

All researchers need to ensure their projects meet high ethical standards that protect the privacy of all participants. The department strongly recommends all projects be approved by a National Health and Medical Research Council (NHRMC)-registered Committee. NHMRC-registered Human Research Ethics Committees are defined and listed here:

http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/health-ethics/human-research-ethics-committees-hrecs/human-research-ethics-committees-hrecs.

Further information regarding Ethics approval options in the Northern Territory is available at:

http://www.health.nt.gov.au/Agency/Advisory_Groups_and_Taskforces/Human_Research_Ethics_Committee/index.aspx.

If the proposal cannot be cleared by an NHMRC-registered committee, the applicant must satisfy the department that procedures have been utilised that satisfy principles of ethical conduct of research. The latter are summarised here: http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/publications/synopses/e72syn.htm .

Applicants that have not obtained ethical clearance or rely on an in-house process should provide the following information:

    a) Why full ethical clearance could not be obtained
    b) Composition and arrangements of your Ethics Committee or proxy (if applicable)

c) Ethical process documentation – how are judgments made about appropriate research design, instruments, participant selection, etc.
d) Membership of Professional Associations of the organisation applying for research
e) Other information endorsing the ethical approach taken by the applicant

Is the research of a sensitive nature?
Provide details of any part of your research that may be sensitive to a participant, for example the actual research topic or the methodology. Research topics that have the potential to be sensitive in nature are provided.

SECTION F – REPORTING
Outline intentions for disseminating research findings, including feedback to participants and the department
Researchers require written consent from the research participant/parent/caregiver before using any samples of work such as drawings, tests, essays, photographs, and websites. Video, photographic or audio recordings are to be used only for the purposes of the research and should be securely stored.

Intellectual Property
If you intend using any materials and documentation belonging to or being developed by the department (e.g. photos, internal documents, education tools, other), you will need to seek written approval.

Date intended to report findings to the department
Insert the date and type of report that will be forwarded to the department.

NOTE: Individual respondents must remain anonymous, and it should not be (reasonably) possible to infer responses or opinions. The researcher should maintain confidentiality of information

SECTION G – ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
This section has been specifically provided for research applicants to insert additional information to support their specific research proposal.

Extension of Project or other changes to the Research Project
Requests to extend the research project period, or to make changes to the actual research project subsequent to receiving the approval to conduct research letter from the department should be submitted online to researchapps.det@nt.gov.au. These requests will only be considered if there are sound reasons presented as to why the research could not be completed within the original period of approval or required modifications. No extension will be granted past the relevant time period endorsed by your Ethics Committee clearance.

SECTION H – RESEARCHER'S DECLARATION
This section should be completed by the Principal Researcher, or the Chief Investigator, or in the case of a research student, the student's supervisor.

Annexure 1: Research Application Checklist
Research Application proposals will be processed promptly where all information is provided and relevant documents attached. It is recommended that you check this list before submitting your Research Application.

Annexure 2: Information Access Application

The Annexure is self-explanatory. The department may seek clarification relating to any data requests – please provide as much initial information as possible.