

Research FAQs – for schools

Why does the department allow research in schools?

The department values evidence-based practice and the benefits research can bring to student learning, teaching practices, school improvement and policy development.

The department sometimes commissions research, partners with research organisations and universities, or supports research in schools if it provides strategic value for the department and has educational (or other) benefits. This may include improvements to pedagogy, departmental policy / procedures, or national initiatives.

Research ranges from system-level data analysis to primary research with staff or students in schools.

What checks and balances are in place to ensure the research is high quality?

The Research team reviews all research applications, considering:

- Research design
- Research instruments (e.g. survey questions, interview guides)
- Recruitment processes
- Information statements and consent forms
- Confidentiality, privacy and security processes
- Ethics approvals by a Human Research Ethics Committees.

The Research Subcommittee ([see here for Subcommittee members](#)) considers all applications, with a view to considering the value, burden and risk of applications and their potential to contribute to education theory, knowledge, policy and practice. The Committee meets monthly, and considers approximately 40-60 applications per year.

How does the research approval process work?

Researchers complete an application form outlining their research proposal, the benefits and risks, and detailing what involvement, if any, is asked of schools and/or the department. Research proposals must demonstrate their educational and strategic value, and be:

- Well designed
- Comply with ethical standards, privacy and data-security guidelines
- Likely to result in relevant, useable and high quality findings
- Minimise disruption to students and schools.

The department's research team ensures that the above criteria are met, and consults relevant business areas and other stakeholders to ensure a thorough understanding of the risks and benefits for students, schools and the department.

Advice is provided to the Research Subcommittee who make a determination whether or not to support the research and provide permission to approach NT government schools.

This approach is consistent with all other states and jurisdictions. Non-government schools run their own research approval processes.

What is ‘permission to approach’?

If research applications are supported by the Research Subcommittee, applicants will receive a letter of support, which acts as ‘permission to approach’ NT government schools to invite their participation.

A letter of support from the department does not oblige schools to participate in external research. **The decision whether or not to participate is at the discretion of the school principal**, taking into consideration your school improvement plan, work load and the interest / value participation would provide to staff and students.

What should I do if I am approached by researchers?

Firstly, ensure researchers have a letter of support from the department’s Research Subcommittee. This ensures thorough checks have been made regarding the research’s quality, value, burden, and compliance with ethical and privacy requirements.

If researchers do not have a letter of support, you can check the status of the research on with the Research team on researchApps.DET@nt.gov.au or direct researchers to the About Education Research webpage [here](#) for information on the application process.

What should I consider when consenting to participate?

When approaching principals seeking school participation, researchers should provide:

- A summary of the proposed research and its benefit(s)
- A clear indication of what is asked of the school, including:
 - Specific activities and proposed timelines
 - Administrative support (e.g. distributing and collecting consent forms)
 - A breakdown of class and teacher time, if relevant
- The Information Statement
- A consent form
- A letter of support from the Research Subcommittee.

Schools are advised to consider the time and resource requirements from a school and classroom perspective. What is the administrative burden? What will the impact be on classrooms involved? Is there a way to schedule research to minimise disruption? Do researchers want to utilise school facilities, for example to undertake consultations or interviews?

What if my school is involved in a research project, but we wish to withdraw?

All research is voluntary. You have the right to withdraw from the research project at any time. If your school's needs change, or there has been a change in leadership at your school, you are encouraged to discuss your ongoing participation directly with the lead researcher.

If you choose to withdraw you should let researchers know directly, ideally in writing.

Depending on the methodology of the research, it may not be possible for some data that has already been provided to be removed. For example, some research projects record only anonymous data, or some are coded and de-identified. Once analysis has begun it may not be possible to locate particular individual's data if it has already been de-identified. Please discuss any concerns with the lead researcher.

What should I do if I'm approached to distribute a flier or share information in the school newsletter about a research project?

If researchers approach you to advertise their research in your school newsletter or to your school community, please consider the following:

- If the research includes the participation of school staff or students, or includes a request for school data (any research that is conducted within the school context), researchers will need to submit an application to conduct research to the Research Subcommittee. Direct researchers to the [About Education Research website](#).
- If the research does not include the participation of school staff or students (for example, an online survey aimed at parents, or a health research project hoping to recruit young children to participate in a health assessment outside of school hours) you may distribute or promote it at your discretion. It is recommended that you consider the needs and values of your school community in deciding which research projects will be most valuable.

Am I permitted to provide data to researchers?

To ensure consistency across sites (for example, different schools, and sometimes different jurisdictions) data should be provided centrally by the Digital and Data team. This allows secure transfer of data, consistency across data requests, and reduces the burden on schools.

Researchers will be required to complete a research application, detailing their data request. The Research team will then liaise with Digital and Data regarding the business rules for each data set.

If you have any questions about data being provided as part of research, please contact the Research team to discuss. If you would like to know what data might be available to support a research project you can also contact stats.det@nt.gov.au

I'm a teacher employed by the department and want to conduct research at my school as part of my own professional development (e.g. a Masters or PhD). Do I need to complete a research application?

If your research includes the involvement of departmental staff, intellectual property (including data), schools or students – then yes, you will need the support of the Research Subcommittee.

Please ensure that in your research application you:

- Declare your position and any conflicts of interest (including on consent forms)
- Clearly state whether the research is part of your job at the department, or independent (for example, as part of a PhD). Ensure that this is stated on your information sheets

If your research is the analysis of publicly available information (for example policy, public data) you do not need the support of the Research Subcommittee, however please keep your manager updated on your research, and provide a summary of your findings for inclusion in the Research Repository to ResearchApps.DET@nt.gov.au.