



**Catholic Education**  
Diocese of Parramatta

# **Conducting Research in Schools in the Diocese of Parramatta**

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## Seeking Approval

Catholic Education Diocese of Parramatta (CEDP) welcomes applications for research that are consistent with the [System Direction \(2016-19\)](#).

### Please Note

- Applications should generally already have Ethics Clearance from their Human Research Ethics Committee of their own organisation prior to submission of the Application Form.
- Research cannot be conducted in system schools without approval from CEDP using the process outlined below.
- The CEDP reserves the right to accept or decline any research application at its own discretion.
- The CEDP does not play a role in promoting external research or recruiting schools.
- CEDP has jurisdiction only for systemic schools in the Diocese of Parramatta. A list of [systemic schools](#) may be found on our website.
- Other Diocesan systems (e.g. Broken Bay and Sydney) and ALL Congregational/Independent Catholic colleges and schools are outside its jurisdiction.
- CEDP approval is not an endorsement of the research, but an indication to schools that the project is ethically sound and meets CEDP requirements as outlined in this document. Researchers with CEDP approval can approach Parramatta Catholic schools, but it is the Principal's decision as to whether they agree for their school to participate in the research in any capacity.

### The Application Process

1. If necessary, contact CEDP to clarify your application prior to submission of the form at [research@parra.catholic.edu.au](mailto:research@parra.catholic.edu.au)
2. Complete the  [National Projects – Application to Conduct Research in Schools](#) form
3. Send the form with all:
  - electronic signatures in place
  - extra documents attached (see sections 7, 9 and 10 of the form) to [research@parra.catholic.edu.au](mailto:research@parra.catholic.edu.au)

Note: If a WWCC is required you will also need to provide your date of birth in order for CEDP to verify your check.
4. Approvals are granted according to:
  - accuracy and completeness of the application form and the required documentation
  - appropriateness and relevance of the research to the [CEDP System Direction](#)
  - the impact on, and benefits to, students, staff, parents, schools and system
  - the number of applications already being implemented.
5. Approval time can be up to 6 weeks from receipt of the form.

6. All researchers will receive a 'Research Determination Letter'.
7. Approved researchers will receive a 'Letter of Approval'.
  - Researchers will use this approval letter to approach individual school Principals for their approval.
  - The 'Letter' may contain conditions of approval to which researchers must adhere.
  - The Principal of each school will have the final decision as to whether they agree for their school to participate in the research.

#### **Research that requires CEDP approval**

1. All non-school based researchers
2. School-based researchers conducting research as part of a degree, PhD or professional doctorate
3. School-based researchers wishing to involve a school or schools that they are not currently employed in
4. All researchers wishing to conduct research that is deemed sensitive (see section 8. Sensitivities of the National Projects Application Form for details).

#### **Research that does NOT require CEDP approval**

1. School staff undertaking research in their own school for the purposes of ongoing learning, reflection and improvement, and with no intention to submit or publish the findings in the public domain outside of their own school.

#### **Research that CEDP is unlikely to support**

CEDP may decline or request changes to applications where:

1. The potential benefits of the research to Catholic education or the broader education community are not demonstrated; or the research is for commercial, journalistic or marketing purposes.
2. Benefits of the research are outweighed by the demands placed on participants and school resources.
3. Required documentation is incomplete or inadequate.
4. The study method is intrusive and/or inappropriate for the school setting, and has the potential to stimulate stress or risk-taking behaviour, or lead participants to incriminate themselves.
5. The researcher lacks the experience or qualifications to conduct research on:
  - a. the private affairs of participants e.g. body image, mental health, family relations, sexuality;
  - b. negative risk-taking behaviour e.g. under-age drinking, illicit drug-taking, violence, stealing, suicide.
6. The research focuses on behaviour outside the experience and age range of the participants.
7. There is an unacceptable level of risk to participants, schools and/or CEDP.

8. Additional support is not provided in relation to matters that may negatively impact participants.
9. Confidentiality and privacy of participants and/or sensitive information is not adequately protected.
10. Inappropriate inducements are offered to participants or schools.
11. Schools and/or participants are not provided with adequate information, and appropriate consent is not sought.
12. An opt-out option or passive consent is used for participant recruitment.

### **Benefit and Value**

It is expected that when researchers conduct research in Parramatta Catholic schools, they do so on the basis that the findings may assist to improve student outcomes, strengthen teacher and school leader capability, and increase school effectiveness. Research in areas beyond the immediate concerns of schools should be conducted only when it can be demonstrated that the findings may have a potential benefit for the participants themselves.

To enhance the benefit and value, researchers should consider and demonstrate:

- the gap in knowledge, understanding and practice the research is seeking to address
- how the research will add value to participants, schools, jurisdictions and the broader education community
- how they can work in partnership with school communities throughout the research process
- how they will communicate the findings and engage stakeholders in the potential implications.
- CEDP will consider the potential demand and burden of the proposed research project, including:
  - the time, resources and coordination required from participating schools
  - the effort and commitment expected from participants (i.e. staff, students and parents)
  - the extent to which the research may disrupt regular school activity or divert attention from school priorities
  - the potential risks to participants, schools and CEDP

### **Duty of Care**

The safety and wellbeing of students is paramount. If researchers wish to conduct any research activity on school grounds, they must present to the school the CEDP Research Approval Letter, valid Working with Children Check/s and the [Building Child Safe Communities](#) (volunteer) completion number before the research can commence.

If the research involves face-to-face interaction with students (e.g. interviews, focus groups, testing), such activities must take place in the presence of a teacher or other adult with legal duty of care, or in an open space in view of school staff. 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.

## Amendments

If researchers wish to make changes to their application, either before or after it has been approved, they are required to email [research@parra.catholic.edu.au](mailto:research@parra.catholic.edu.au) with: the project title; name of the principal researcher; date of the Research Determination Letter (if already provided) clear details of the amendments; and copies of any changed documentation.

For application's that are more than three years old, or the modifications are major, researchers will be asked to submit a new application.

## Final Report

It is a condition of CEDP approval that researchers submit a summary of their research findings to CEDP and participating schools.

The final report should include:

1. the title of the research
2. the name of the principal researcher and their organisation or institution
3. a summary/abstract of the research
4. the rationale for the research and how it sought to add value to education
5. the research questions and hypotheses that were explored
6. a brief outline of the research design and methodology
7. findings in relation to the research questions
8. implications of the findings for schools and the broader education community

## Engaging schools in research

Schools are primarily sites for learning and teaching, and school leaders and teachers are understandably critical of activities that take them away from their core work. While educational research has great potential to add value to school communities, many requests to participate in research are turned down by schools.

[The Understanding School Engagement in Research \(USER\) project](#) was conducted by Catholic Education Melbourne in 2016 to better understand and meet the needs of schools in regard to their engagement in research projects and the findings. This maybe a useful resource when completing your research application.

## Publications

The CEDP must be advised of any publications in which CEDP or its schools is named as an organisation based on derived data collected and analysis associated with the research approved. CEDP reserves the right to assess publications and negotiate editorial change to ensure the good name and public image of the organisation is not demeaned.

## Confidentiality and Privacy

Researchers must comply with the Privacy Act 1988, Commonwealth, and protect the privacy, confidentiality and where possible anonymity of participants, both in the collection and storage of data. Aggregation of data where possible will assist in the protection of privacy.

If anonymity is not possible or guaranteed (due to audio or video taping participants, small sample size, collecting identifying information for longitudinal studies, tracking and data-linking purposes) then participants must be informed of this and confidentiality assured. Individual participants and schools must not be named in any reporting of research findings unless explicit consent has been given. It is preferred that pseudonyms are used in these instances.

Data should only be used for the purpose for which it was collected, and if researchers wish to use de-identified data in future-ethically approved research, they must seek active consent from participants.

Researchers need to outline in their application and information to schools and participants:

- how they will ensure confidentiality in the collection, analysis and storage of data, and in the reporting of research findings
- adequate processes for the secure storage of and access to data
- justification for any limitations to confidentiality and anonymity.

### Information for Schools

Any person seeking to engage CEDP schools for research must have prior approval by the CEDP. Approved researchers must supply the following to the school before research is permitted:

- CEDP Research Approval Letter
- A copy of the researcher/s Working With Children Check/s and [Building Child Safe Communities](#) completion number if required
- Approval to conduct research within a school is at the sole discretion of the Principal

### Acknowledgement

Catholic Education Diocese of Parramatta wishes to acknowledge and thank Catholic Education Archdiocese of Sydney and Catholic Education Melbourne for the approval to base these guidelines on their documents:

Conducting Research in Sydney Catholic Schools Guidelines.

CEM Requirements of seeking approval and conducting research in schools.